

The Independent Florida Alligator
By Michelle Villamar – Contributing Writer
Wednesday, February 27, 2002

Local firm recognized for impressive growth

Silicon Valley is being recreated in Gainesville's backyard.

Digi-Net Technologies, Inc., a messaging technology for e-commerce and community building applications, announced today it was selected as one of Florida's fastest-growing private companies Friday.

"More than half of our staff is from the University of Florida or the Gainesville area," said Robert Parker, founder and chief executive officer of Digi-Net. "This community has been awesome to us and we realize that and are thankful of what a great thing we have here."

Digi-Net ranks as the eighth fastest growing private company and the fastest growing information technology company in Florida.

Annual rankings are calculated by measuring a company's percentage growth over a three-year period. UF's Warrington College of Business Administration, the Fisher School of Accounting and the Center of Entrepreneurship & Innovation sponsored the program. The Florida 100 provides recognition to the fastest growing private companies in Florida.

Digi-Net has come a long way from its humble beginnings, Parker said.

The first Digi-Net desk was a borrowed oversized barn door that was laid across two filing cabinets. The company's first servers were two personal computers on loan from roommates that would frequently "go offline" if one of them had a school project or assignment due that required the use of a computer, Parker said.

"Digi-Net was started with less than \$1,000 and was just enough for the office space," he said. "We have come a long way, and to be recognized and honored in this way brings a great sense of pride to our entire team."

Digi-Net began in 1996 as an Internet consulting firm specializing in assisting businesses. In January 1999, Parker transformed the company from a predominantly Web-based consulting firm to a commercial software development company.

Digi-Net develops and markets its communications software and services into two major segments: community building and electronic commerce. DigiChat and Groopz E-Commerce are the products for the two segments.

DigiChat allows a person to chat with others without downloading software.

Groopz E-Commerce incorporates customer service with online shopping.

“It makes it possible for an online sales team to look at what you are doing,” Garabelis said. “They can send people an instant message to help.”