



Pennsylvania Gaming Control Board Provides Greater Access to its Decision-Making Process

State agency strengthens public access using the latest innovations to deliver a searchable, online public record

Problem

PGCB was heavily scrutinized when they began overseeing a controversial industry. The agency wanted to improve access to public meetings and increase its overall level of transparency, but with few staff and limited resources, they were unsure how to accomplish this goal.

Solution

In partnering with Granicus, the agency deployed archived streaming media and created integrated public records which include meeting agendas posted alongside an indexed video.

Benefit

PGCB increased accessibility to online public records and witnessed over 500 viewers access on-demand content within the first few weeks of launching the technology.

Client Profile

Agency Type: State Agency
Population: 12,600,000
Client Since: 2010

The Pennsylvania Gaming Control Board (PGCB) oversees the casino industry in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Its primary objective is to protect the public interest through regulation and licensing of casinos which offer slot machine and table gambling.

Pennsylvania residents, elected members, and media demanded greater access to a new state agency's deliberations

Formed in 2004, the Pennsylvania Gaming Control Board (PGCB) was established to oversee the new casino industry in the state of Pennsylvania with a primary objective of protecting the public interest and the integrity of gaming. The agency garnered heavy media attention for monitoring a controversial industry. "From the beginning, we were tightly watched and scrutinized by both public officials and citizens," recalls Doug Harbach, Director of Communications. "We knew that we needed to provide a level of transparency that would assist those outside of the agency in understanding how we operate," Harbach adds.

PGCB strived to present itself as an open, reliable, public agency and offered meeting agendas and transcripts online. "We posted a great deal of content to our website yet we continued to receive email and phone requests for information," Harbach said. With public information requests inundating the agency, PGCB realized that they still needed to take it one step further. "One area that was still untapped in allowing the public to see more of how we conducted our business was through our meetings," says Harbach.

Meetings are generally held in Harrisburg, PA and as Harbach notes, "are not easily accessible and it's challenging for people in other parts of the state." PGCB does not have a dedicated meeting chamber so notifying the public of meeting locations was also difficult. Yet, there was a strong interest in the decision-making process and the agency could easily draw hundreds of attendees to a single meeting.

Understanding the importance and need for greater access, Harbach and his colleague, Richard McGarvey, Deputy Director of Communications, began researching solutions. "We saw other organizations posting video to the Web, but neither Doug nor I had an extensive technical background," recalls McGarvey.

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- Doug Harbach,
Pennsylvania Gaming Control Board Director of Communications

They looked into a few cost-effective options, including YouTube and posting standard Windows media files online, but due to restrictions with file size and security concerns, these were not realistic solutions. "We were really worried about quality control, reliability, and support and wanted a more proven solution," says McGarvey.

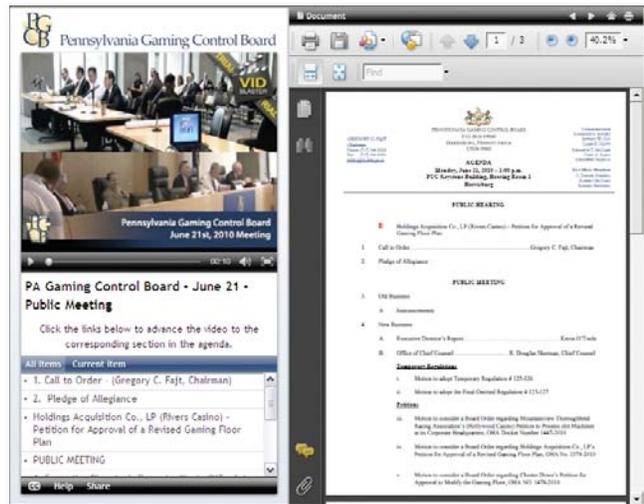
State agency implements a trusted online streaming media solution

In January of 2010 Harbach and McGarvey attended a Granicus educational seminar with several other Pennsylvania state agencies. "When I saw what Granicus offered, I was happy with the quality of the product, how it was presented on various websites, and immediately thought this was our next step," recalls Harbach. And for McGarvey it all seemed rather simple. "I already had cameras and equipment so getting our meetings posted to the web with our agenda was the next step, and that's where Granicus came into the picture," he says.

As a relatively new agency with a strong public interest in its proceedings, Harbach felt the timing could not have been better. "This was a good time to seize upon a tool that would give the public greater access to PGCB's decision-making process," says Harbach.

PGCB partnered with Granicus to provide archive streaming of public meetings and hearings. The agency relied on Granicus for a secure and fully hosted solution, eliminating previous concerns of file size and bandwidth constraints. The solution included keyword search of archives, live indexing, and supporting materials posted alongside the video.

In charge of running the software, McGarvey was able to publish fully indexed videos within hours of the meeting. He also merged two video feeds to allow his department to concentrate on the meeting



Pennsylvania Gaming Control Board's integrated public records allow interested parties to quickly jump to items of interest and follow along with supporting materials

itself rather than on running AV equipment. "We're essentially a two-person shop with hundreds of attendees at our meetings, including the media, so neither of us had time to run AV," says McGarvey.

The PGCB broadens participation at public meetings with online attendance, drawing more than 500 viewers in just weeks

PGCB increased accessibility to online public records of its meetings, fulfilling the Communication Department's goal of creating a broader level of transparency around board deliberations. "With a controversial industry like gaming, we wanted to make sure the public was comfortable with our decisions. Granicus makes this possible," says Harbach. Within the first few weeks of offering online access, PGCB reported over 500 viewers to on-demand content, with one particular meeting drawing over 150 visitors.

"The Board is excited to stream meetings because they know there has been public outcry over the years for more information and this a great way to provide it," he continues. Offering public meetings online further supports PGCB's overall objective of protecting the public interest and fostering a better understanding of the agency's work.

PGCB also saw improvements to business internally after deploying Granicus. "We have over 300 staff members who don't usually attend meetings or hearings but need to know what occurred. They can now access archived meetings from their desks, saving us hours in responding to internal information requests," says Harbach. And from the user perspective, McGarvey was relieved with the ease of use of the technology. "I was impressed with how easy the program was to use and how quickly I picked it up," he remarks.

The organization has opened their meetings beyond in-person attendance, allowing state residents, elected members, staff, and media to access information quickly and easily. "For our board, the idea of continuing down the path of having all of our decision-making as transparent as possible is very exciting," says Harbach.

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