

CONFERENCE CALLS

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Product Updates

ALERT Plus – THE BEST GETS EVEN BETTER

Forum Communications continues to lead the market with solutions for government and business communications. Responding to the Homeland Security/Public Safety sector, Forum’s Confer A.L.E.R.T. (Advanced Localized Emergency Response Teleconferencing) system is a popular replacement for aging “crash” and “red phone” systems, with ring-down circuits, touch screen and real-time remote site status.



The next generation, the ALERT Plus, provides even more versatility. The ALERT Plus allows not only local campus dedicated lines to ring but can call outside (PSTN) phone numbers in order to contact key emergency management personnel by cell phone. In addition, ALERT Plus allows outside callers to initiate a blast of campus phones. Peripheral equipment items such as emergency phones, remote contact closure modules, and remote PA/Speaker modules are now offered that make Forum your single source for emergency crash system equipment needs. Watch for more details on this “hot” new product.

OUTLOOK Integration Now Available as SE Upgrade

Based on increased demand, Forum Communications is now offering Outlook integration as an optional upgrade for the Consortium Special Edition. The Consortium SE was introduced earlier this year to provide a feature-rich enterprise conference solution for companies who do not require all the functions of the Classic Consortium system. Outlook integration lets you integrate

Outlook Scheduling with your Consortium server to maximize productivity and efficiency. For a demonstration, call your Forum dealer or account manager.

Return On Investment

Pre-Planning Pays Off!

When a cyber-attack or email security problem hits major corporations, research facilities, transportation or utility companies, the story makes international headlines. The incident can freeze activities for hours or days. During the recent storm in Florida, call center personnel were flown out-of-state to re-route calls to West Coast facilities, or were "locked-in" call centers (some along with their families). Your Business Continuity Plan and Corporate Security Program must include telecommunications and critical teleconferencing, not only data, personnel and power protection.

To implement your continuity plan you need instant collaboration – the affordable Confer ECS and Confer ALERT systems start under \$20,000. If you need to implement a crash or facility lockdown, these affordable, dependable solutions enable your security and management teams to stay in control of developing events.

Bringing Conferencing In-House

Are you still using an outside conference server? What happens when a conference call is breached? An in-house conference system provides more real-time conference control and security functions than most business services. Additional functions that increase your service costs come standard with an enterprise conference solution like the Consortium or Consortium SE. Both the Confer and Consortium systems are invisible to the end-user and require minimum set-up and admin time.

Fighting Budget Cutbacks

Back-to-back years of cost cutting, slashed budgets, mergers and "right-sizing" have left many Communications and IT departments crippled. Medium-sized and small businesses are often more dramatically affected because of cash flow issues and other challenges.

Many companies are finding that supporting aging PCs and outdated software can drive up administration costs (up to 80% of total ownership costs). Many businesses are analyzing the cost of such delays to justify hardware AND software upgrades. Forum Communications offers special programs to maximize the life of our systems.

To Update or Not to Update, That's The Question

Have you reviewed the lifespan for IT systems lately? Upgrading your servers? The Consortium or Consortium SE run on Windows 2000 and support clients on Windows 98, NT, 2000, XP and 2003. Enhanced conference management, Outlook integration and more efficient system management are available with the Consortium 4.5 system. Special pricing is available through December 30, 2004 on Consortium SE and Confer III systems. Call your Forum dealer or Forum Communications (972-680-0700) to find out more and to schedule a demo.

Studying ROI on email?

A recent study published by MarketingSherpa.com shows that email recipients actually open and click a lot more on Monday: 35% of all email sent on Monday gets opened. That's actually the second-highest result of the week. Saturday was tops at close to 40%, but with fewer incoming emails. Other trends to note: Nine a.m. Pacific Time is the peak hour for sending, opening and clicking on email for every day in the week except Tuesday. As the week wears on, people wait until later and later in the day to deal with their email. Email volume on Friday is the lowest, less than 8%, approximately one-third of it does get opened. If you would like to be added to our email list go to <http://www.forum-com.com/request.php> and tell us all about yourself.

Dealer's Corner

Twenty-Three Billion in Federal IT contracts Q2 2004

A recent report shows a 50% growth rate over the same period last year (\$15.5 billion) . Big Spenders are Homeland Security, Army, Navy, Air Force and Transportation Departments – awarded \$21 billion of all contract dollars. Set-aside awards to small businesses decreased 20% during the same three months.

The Homeland Security Department has requested \$3.6 billion for fiscal 2005 to prepare first responders.

According to the House of Representatives, \$5.2 billion of the \$6.3 billion already appropriated for terrorism preparedness remains unspent. Money for technology has been carefully, if not cautiously, spent. Blaming the slow pace of evolving standards for technology for slowing down implementation, experts say the rate of spending should increase in 2005. Overall spending on homeland security technology is expected to grow slowly for the next two years, but should accelerate by 2007, when regional pilot projects are implemented nationally.

Working the Plan

Do you remember the hours & effort put into creating (or re-writing) a corporate business plan or start-up funding proposals? The "outline" itself was the size of two large phone books. How many days did you spend creating your latest corporate mission statement?

Now we are asked to "laser" our message. We talk about an elevator pitch, a 15 second summary to spark your listener's curiosity. Popular self-help books are targeted to help us articulate our personal mission. We also spend significant resources managing continuity plans.

However you look at it, the most critical aspect of this process is that you DO look at it. Almost as important is that you WRITE IT DOWN, REVIEW IT FREQUENTLY and UPDATE IT when the market, technology or customer needs evolve. The bottom-line is: you need to be able to articulate your value proposition so others want to know more about you and your solutions. If you need assistance go to <http://www.smallbusinessplanguide.com/information.php> If you need assistance articulating the benefits and value-add of our Forum products, please contact your local dealer or Forum Communications.

Suggested Reading:

- How to Get Your Point Across in 30 Seconds or Less, Milo O. Frank
- The Medium is the Message, Marshall McLuhan
- You Are the Message, Roger Ailes & Jon Krausher

Emphasize Cost & Performance Early

One of our universal challenges as salespeople and as customers is weighing the balance between cost and value. We've all known (or been) beginning salespeople who were afraid to ask

for the sale or to bring up a dollar figure. We have also seen that the most successful people are NOT afraid to bring up cost and value early in the sales process. When was the last time your pro-active results were more successful than "re-active" response? Do you remember how you felt about each situation? Here are some tools you can use in your conversations:

"How much are you spending now to get those results?"

Know what you can offer that your competition does not and ask if they use that function.

"Would it make your job easier if you had that function?"

Let your Forum Product Specialist increase your awareness of the type of customers and prime government agencies who use our systems 24/7 because of our quality and reliability. Property, lives and business continuity depend on the Consortium and Confer systems.

Learn to help your decision-makers shift their internal paradigm from "justifying expenditures" to "improving productivity." Show them the article above, "Return on Investment," to better understand what inaction or a delay can cost them.

Share your success stories with your Forum dealer or account manager.

Call our Forum Communications experts to schedule product training for your sales staff. Let them demonstrate how our teleconference solutions sell themselves! Call 972-680-0700. If you don't know who your company is working with, ask Rebeka for assistance!

Communications and Readiness

Recent Publications:

Nuclear News Magazine
Year in Defense Magazine

Eye On The Border

With President George W. Bush sending National Guardsmen to assist Border Patrol, more eyes are looking at funding for Bush's \$1.3 billion Secure Border Initiative.

Congressional committees say they want to see a strategic plan for the Secure Border Initiative before approving the funding. Rep. Harold Rogers asked, "How do you know that items such as \$100 million in technology and \$51 million in desert tactical infrastructure are needed? When presented with questions like this, we apply a simple formula: "No plan equals no money." "

Rogers also said the government has spent millions on "elaborate border technology that, eventually, has proven to be ineffective and wasteful," such as the Integrated Surveillance Intelligence System and America Shield Initiative. He refers to the SBI as just another three-letter acronym for failure.

Tapping Existing Contracts for Future Emergencies

The Office of Federal Procurement Policy is heading up the development of a database for emergency response contracting. The Homeland Security Department and the General Services Administration are collecting information on existing contracts that agencies could buy products and services through in emergency situations.

The need for the database is part of the lessons learned from the government's problems with hurricanes Katrina and Rita last summer. One government official complained that employees initiated new contracts because they didn't know what was already in place. The agencies are also developing an online list of federal experts who can respond during emergency situations.

Maintaining current government contacts becomes even more critical for channel partners and manufacturers, as trust and reliability continue to weigh purchasing decisions.

The Mail Must Go Through

The U.S. government is a major user of teleconferencing technology for business and planning meetings, and as you would imagine, for emergency communications. The U.S. Postal Service in Washington DC and other regional locations across the country utilize Forum Communication's systems to support their conference calls.

Because of the versatility and durability of the Consortium Conference Server, post office officials were able to utilize teleconferencing around the clock during the hurricanes and floods that struck the southeast last year. Their conference system allowed this critical agency to provide support for the remote mail processing stations, postal employees and customers. For technical details on the new 2006 Consortium II, please forward your requests to us, or click on Consortium II.

Improving Emergency Response

"Preparation through Education is less costly than learning through tragedy." --Max Mayfield, director, National Hurricane Center.

Turning a negative into a positive, or at least into a learning experience, is a sign of true leadership. With the current upheaval in FEMA reorganization in Washington over emergency support to the storm-ravaged Gulf Coast last year, there are many lessons to be learned from the immediate and post-emergency response efforts. The spotlight on communications and network infrastructure has provided lessons for many businesses and government agencies.

WE GOT SOME THINGS RIGHT!

- Coast Guard and NORCOM anticipated support needs; and acted swiftly to move the Control Center out of harm's way to St. Louis.
- Agencies maintained focus on the primary mission of Search & Rescue, with or without communications support.
- Military aircraft brought in widespread transponder nodes to support an 18-mile internal cellular telephone network.
- USCG brought in staff from other regions, so locals could handle their own family emergencies.
- Support Command teams from Fort Hood utilized their disaster-relief experiences in Iraq to help the Gulf Coast.
- Wartime dialogs between governments helped in coordinating between local government & private agencies.
- Mobile command centers & wireless IT technology were delivered by C-130, complete with power generators.

WHAT DID WE LEARN

- Situational Awareness is a term not even used in the private sector until the military implemented their response.
- Unity of command and incident reporting did not fail, it never existed.
- Too many delays were caused by people & politics.
- Protocols for mutual support coordination were lacking; no way to coordinate multiple resources efficiently.
- Communication infrastructure failed - required radical means to restore or replace outdated

technology during the crisis.

-- Redundancy and replacement technology were neither pre-planned nor pre-budgeted.

MOVING FORWARD

Two areas that we know need to be strengthened in both our local and national planning are Responsiveness and Accountability.

Conference bridges demonstrated their utility during both rescue and rebuilding phases:--
Maintaining daily contact with rescue teams, team members and agencies

- Tracking personnel and safety status
- Staying connecting with priority resources and "Hot Spots"
- Logistics support, fleet status and internal communications
- Instant contact with vendors and subcontractors to expedite delivery and support
- Connect remote control centers with on-site personnel with federal agencies
- Re-assess and assign priorities in real-time
- Collaboration beyond borders.

As a nation we need to focus on our frail & vulnerable information infrastructure. In an age when affordable, birthright collaborative technology exists, it must be included in plans, exercises AND budgets. We also need to assure power for communications in those plans and budgets.

Small airfields and local communities especially lean on outside support, since the emergency plan & support programs in place are locally focused. Resources are different: radio frequencies become overcrowded; cell service may be unreliable. Limited city and volunteer budgets result in limited response equipment and limited funds for upgrading communications equipment. Training programs are often limited to medical and fire programs, without extended emergency event management skills.

From experience we have learned how important it is that command centers are smoothly operated by trained agency personnel in the future. We've also seen that conferencing and collaboration tools like the BLAST-911, the ALERT Plus and Forum's large enterprise servers can easily be integrated into intelligence, decision-making and command functions whenever, wherever and whatever the crisis or strategy may require.

At a recent IT Leadership Conference, Dr. Elizabeth McDaniel, of the National Defense University summed up our country's needs best, "The qualities that will distinguish the next generation of government leaders are defined in part by the new uncertainties leaders face in government. Chief among the new requirements for government leaders are having the ability to be agile in the face of uncertainty, innovative in the face of complexity, passionate about an agency's mission, and being transformational rather than transactional in approaching the work of government."