

CONFERENCE CALLS

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Product Updates

CONSORTIUM WORLD

WEB MEET DEMONSTRATIONS AVAILABLE

Bring Your Web Collaboration In-House

RELEASE 4.5.2 New Features

- Additional privileges assigned to Moderator codes
- Increased flexibility through server socket configuration
- Streamline print, record and operator processes
- Works seamlessly with Windows Terminal Services and XP SP2
- Participants join the call without DTMF response (Admin selectable)

OUTLOOK 2003 Update

Those of you who have an earlier version of Consortium software 4.5 version can request a free update to interface with Outlook 2003. If your older version does not have Outlook scheduling interface, contact your account manager or dealer for upgrade pricing. You can also purchase an upgrade to add Outlook Scheduling for your Consortium SE. Contact Forum to place your order.

CONFER FAMILY OF SOLUTIONS

MARKET DEVELOPMENT

Forum Communications continues its aggressive drive into the emergency communications/first responder market with the Confer ALERT, ALERT Plus and Confer ECS. Emphasis on a team approach and customer feedback lets Forum focus on the needs of specific industry niches and provide seamless replacements for outdated red phone and crash systems.

The world leader in B-to-B teleconference hardware, Forum is planning more system option releases for both the Consortium and Confer lines in 2005.

AIRPORT/AIR FORCE INSTALLATIONS

Forum Communications engineering team developed the Confer ALERT, ALERT Plus and Confer ECS based on military specifications for emergency first responder technology. Now commercial airports are realizing that their entire critical response initiatives rely on aging systems that have been out of manufacture for many years. Forum's products provide the reliability and stability that

are so critical in any airport response plan. Contact Forum Communications or your Forum dealer for more details and a demonstration.

CONFER WEB & CONFER VIEW

With the evolution of the Confer III line, Forum engineers continue to add value with remote management options. Released with Basic and Premium remote administrative options, Confer increased navigational ease with a handful of voice prompts, including welcome greetings and customizable greetings.

The last year provided a myriad of option releases and system upgrades to meet changing customer needs. ConferView and Confer Emergency Collaboration System brought a higher level of dial-out and blast dial sophistication to the Confer product line. The custom-designed GUI (graphic user interface) allows system administrators to view the system configuration and port status without going into the corporate phone room. Creating and managing lists for immediate blast dial calls (including emergency response calls), gave Forum a big push into military and public safety markets.

The ConferWeb provides a higher level of control and system management, letting multiple administrators access the real-time system status and make instant adjustments through the Local Area Network (LAN). GUI software is easy to navigate and additional upgrades and features are in the works for the new year!

Return On Investment

GETTING THE MAX...

According to a recent study, the top three barriers to productivity account for more than half of lost time for large and small businesses:

- Insufficient management planning and control.
- Inadequate supervision.
- Ineffective communications.

The study recommends changes in behavior and process to measurably reduce overtime and enhance efficiency. (Source: "Managing for Mediocrity")

Forum provides our own recommendations for enhanced communications:

1. Integrate instant conferencing at all levels into troubleshooting procedures
2. Host more meetings via conference call
3. Manage and streamline internal communications processes and channels
4. Develop specific goals and structure for the planning process and each meeting
5. Use your Forum conference bridge to host "five-minute" stand-up meetings
6. Use web conferencing to verify details and collaborate (go to WebMeet)

For more information on instant conferencing, blast dial, Outlook conference scheduling or automatic email (for reports, reminders and notifications), contact Forum at 972-680-0700.

LEVERAGING SAVINGS

A recent report from Aberdeen Group says that organizations that leverage technology to manage telecom realized an average of 26.1% savings.

Not leveraging telecom technology costs midsize organizations \$2 million dollars per year. Forum conference solutions are in the \$3-7,000 range for 8-16 ports. A 24-port server based system (Consortium SE) starts under \$30,000 – with real-time control via LAN and intranet, robust reporting and available web collaboration.

If your organization is spending hundreds every month, the Confer systems can be justified in a few months. If they are spending thousands per month, the more sophisticated Consortium or Consortium SE give you the control and expandability that you need, with a price tag you can easily justify.

If you are not using teleconference and web conferencing, it is definitely worth your while to see how many meetings could be moved to conference calls to save travel time/cost and save precious hours and days in problem-solving and creative brainstorming!

Dealer's Corner

Things are Looking UP!

CNN Money and Industry Week predict capital spending up 4.3% this year on average with a 3.7% in tech \$\$.

Heading Back to the Classroom?

2004 Wall Street Journal/Harris Interactive Business School Survey recently ranked the top U.S. business schools. Here are the findings:

Top Business Schools

1. University of Michigan (Stephen M. Ross School of Business)
2. Carnegie Mellon University (David A. Tepper School of Business)
3. Dartmouth College (Tuck School of Business)
4. University of Pennsylvania (Wharton School)
5. University of Chicago
6. Yale University
7. Northwestern University (Kellogg Graduate School of Management)
8. Columbia University
9. MIT (Sloan School of Management)
10. Stanford University

Top for Technology/Telecommunications/Internet

1. MIT (Sloan)
2. Carnegie Mellon (Tepper)
3. University of Maryland (Robert H. Smith School of Business)
4. Brigham Young University (Marriott School of Management)
5. Harvard University
6. University of Michigan (Ross)
7. University of Denver (Daniels College of Business)
8. Stanford University
9. University of Texas (McCombs School of Business)
10. University of California, Berkeley (Haas School of Business)

What's In A Title?

Is your tech support manager required to be part magician, wizard, psychiatrist, stuntman, seer and negotiator? IT personnel have to wear many hats, what's worse the trend indicates that technology infrastructure and business process may be losing their elite place in today's business. As we become more reliant on infrastructure, the more IT functions meld into daily operations, becoming as critical a utility as electricity and transportation.

Communications and Readiness

REDUNDANCY, DIVERSITY & REDIRECTION...

Only a complete mirror of emergency response center would meet disaster recovery time of 3-4 hours. We suggest a second facility which can be used for training, QA work, development & testing, thus all redundant systems are also working assets.

BEST PRACTICES

The Defense Acquisition Guidebook is an interactive, on-line resource for government agencies. The document is designed to serve as a companion to acquisition guidelines updated in 2003.

Five factors influence buying decisions: flexibility, responsiveness, innovation, discipline, and streamlined and effective management. The Defense Acquisition Guidebook is available at akss.dau.mil/DAG.

RISE OF THE CISO

Media surveys show that Chief Information Security Officers have more influence -- and greater challenges -- than ever before.

DRAWING THE LINE

How do you define Emergency vs. Crisis in your corporate culture?

Here are a few suggestions: is it localized and controllable, vs. imminent threat or harm to business, networks, people, property, reputation?

The more widespread the event and the risk become, the more critical are immediacy and initiating the appropriate response. An issue is not a crisis with no immediate harm or disruption. If ignored, it can escalate to a controversy, and eventually ...a crisis.

One helpful practice for your staff and management is to create a diverse list of events and then "rate" each from one end of the Emergency continuum to the other!

Find out more about Forum's Emergency Collaboration and ALERT Crash systems. Contact Forum Communications at 972-680-0700 to schedule a demonstration.

AIRLINE/AIRPORT EMERGENCY NEEDS

Giovanni Bisignani, Director General and CEO of International Air Transport Association told the European Civil Aviation Conference in Paris that Infrastructure Safety is one of the Six Critical

Points for the industry, "A global industry requires global solutions. Standardization is critical to improving safety. The industry needs a common safety benchmark that crosses borders, alliances, business models and consumer groups." Forum Communications provides the benchmark in Emergency Response Communication.

CRITICAL RESPONSE IN ENERGY INDUSTRY

Emergency management and accountability are mandated and monitored by federal agencies and the local community for both personal safety and power-reliability. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) and Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) supervise and grade emergency drills and practice scenarios. Outdated communications technology can impact those scores and jeopardize business and energy delivery for a major population.

"We need 100% reliability for all our drills. The system has definitely met our expectations," reports one Emergency Response manager about the new Confer ECS system installed in their location. "We have the ability to add additional parties into the call after the initial warning call. We have flexibility that we did not have with the old response system."

As with any utility or agency, group notification, immediate communication and safety are critical. Daily operations require distribution of equipment, technical specialists and maintenance teams, as well as power distribution. Distances between facilities make face-to-face meetings impractical for many events.

Replacing 20 year old technology that was no longer available and no longer repairable, the team contacted Forum Communications to meet reliability and redundancy needs for emergency communications, but was also to get the best value for their community.

Confer ECS is the most practical solution for their needs and their budget. The Confer Design and Support teams worked very closely with the on-site telecom team to provide personal support.

The decision to deploy the ECS was based on a number of factors. The Confer system met or exceeded all the following:

- Reliability – with over 8000 conference systems worldwide, Forum systems are used in critical government agencies, national media networks and other 24/7 business locations. The utility ran daily practice runs for 3 weeks, creating multiple emergency scenarios to test the ECS.
- Value – the Confer ECS made cents (and sense). Forum has always been committed to providing the best solution at the best pricing. The ECS provides a unique set of first responder functions that other more expensive conference systems can not.
- Immediacy – with connectivity in seconds, the ECS consistently exceeded government notification standards.
- Customer Care – with availability of a Forum engineer and technical team for one-on-one support, the on-site telecom team was able to get questions answered, fine tune their internal procedures and customize the interface for their installation.
- Ease of Use – the Forum systems install easily. Multiple, programmable phone lists let the agency set up and edit both primary and secondary call teams, and create lists for different response teams and shifts. The graphic user interface (GUI) is intuitive and shows port activity in real-time.
- Stability – regulatory and local requirements mean daily testing of telephone lines and equipment, including the crash system.
- Redundancy – crash blast can be initiated 3 ways: via off-hook crash phone, GUI interface or secondary initiator code. System can be used for meet-me conferences and cleared for priority crash calls.

- Feature Set – the Confer ECS provides a subminiature jack for recording, voice prompts, meet-me capability, crash blast and global crash blast functions, self mute/unmute, drop individual lines, clear the bridge, full duplex audio, automatic gain and echo cancellation. The system is expandable in 8 port increments to 72. Spare components are available for ECS, ALERT and ALERT Plus packages.

The Confer line of audio conference bridges was developed in the early 80's to provide affordable, on-premise conferencing when other bridge-makers focused only on bureau-size mega-conferencing.

Forum Communications' latest success story is its innovative emergency response solutions, the Confer ALERT (Advanced Localized Emergency Response Teleconferencing), ALERT Plus and the Confer ECS (Emergency Collaboration System), starting at just under \$20,000 for 16 ports. Forum's versatility allows end users to host board meetings, strategic planning meetings and to connect emergency teams together, saving on time and travel while ensuring continued team efficiency.

Seize the Future

Study Shows Americans Working Longest Hours Since 1973

Fax, cell phones, pdas, emails are all supposed to make life easier...instead it gets busier... What recharges your batteries? Family? Hobbies?

“LEAN” is the operative word in today's management circles. Workers at all levels continue to push themselves to improve skills and efficiency year after year, day after day. Our families and our health pay the price for the extra pressure and stress.

Think of the weight trainer who wants to achieve peak performance. A critical part of training is rest and recovery. Recovery is when growth occurs. If you have no recovery, you have no growth.

Our bodies are designed with Circadian cycles to let us know when to sleep, wake, eat and work. With internet and cable access around the clock, light pollution in cities and towns, and all night drive-through restaurants, humans seem to be ignoring the natural rhythms that tell us when to rest and recover.

Here is a quick note of advice: schedule break times throughout the day to disengage from work. You increase your ability to refuel and preserve more energy for family and recreation! It will help you focus your mind and energy more effectively.

Spend more time with your grandchildren, OR grandparents – they seem to have their own agendas and certainly a different perspective on the world!

Walk. Listen. Close your eyes and see if you can identify every sound in your office, neighborhood or home. Listen to music.

Soon you should find your “anxiety” turning back into “energy!”

Forum Communications welcomes your comments or ideas on teleconferencing and communications technology. Please forward your comments and requests to us. Thanks for your input!