



## Using the INFORUM Virtual Office To Gain Control of a World-Wide Support Program

In 1994, Kelly AFB since closed by the Base Closure and Realignment (BRAC), was the home of the San Antonio Air Logistics Center and responsible for the Comprehensive Engine Monitoring System Increment IV (CEMS IV). CEMS IV was a jet engine trending and diagnostic program used on 11 engines and 12 aircrafts.

The CEMS IV program was seriously under funded, behind schedule, and undermanned. The new program manger needed help to solve a myriad of problems including:

1. How to build consensus among a diverse group of stakeholders from end users to engine manufactures
2. How to collect the information necessary to justify continuing the program
3. How determine which changes to implement and in what time frame to maximize ROI
4. How to support 700 users at 140 bases in 50 states and seven countries from Kuwait to the Philippines with a staff of one.
5. Development of a strategic plan.

"I was so busy fighting alligators everyday, I did not have time to do my job - drain the swamp," said Al Morrison the program manager.

### **Web-Based Program Management**

This worldwide environment with diverse stakeholders required a new approach to traditional program management. What was needed was a single place, *a* virtual office, for everyone involved in the program to use to post questions and get answers to everyday problems.

It required what is found in the INFORUM's Virtual Office Solution, a collaborative work environment that allowed end users in Kuwait, engineers in Oklahoma City, managers at Command Headquarters, and manufacturers in Connecticut and Florida to work together

Working with the precursor to the **INFORUM Virtual Center**, the CEMS IV program manger was able to gain control of the program by providing the following:

1. Discussion boards for all stakeholders
2. Electronic library where all relevant information was easily available to stakeholders
3. A single place to post and review program change request
4. A strategic planning system that allowed all stakeholders to have input into the direction and goals of the program
5. A program calendar that not only kept tract of when program events were planned to occur (change freeze dates, testing schedules, etc.), but also when other related but also non-program events occurred (other meetings, deployments, etc.).

### **Quantifiable Benefits**

Using this virtual office allowed the CEMS IV program to get quickly back on course. Using the discussion groups and announcement feature, the program manager and various stakeholders were able to efficiently agree and what changes needed to be made to the program. Users were able to post questions and get answers from peers and the program office on how to better use CEMS IV, as well as, how to interpret specific trends on engines in the field. The electronic library gave users access to lessons learned information, engine managers could review and approve system revision documents, test plans, etc. Program Change Request could be entered by all stakeholders, reviewed, time and cost estimates applied and go no go decisions made. The calendar system allowed for planning and scheduling meetings with various stakeholder groups so they did not conflict with other events and it gave everyone information on when releases were scheduled, hardware and software updates were scheduled to be fielded. The strategic planning function allowed all stakeholders to participate in planning for the future and provided information necessary to prepare and defend budgets.

### **Virtual Offices Get Results**

Using the virtual office concept, allows for smaller group of program-dedicated personnel to perform the work of large physical office by tapping into the expertise and time of all stakeholders. Most importantly, the virtual office concept allows you to work the way we used to on projects when everyone was in the same office without the distractions of other projects and task. The virtual office puts everyone in the same place no matter where they are physically located and it eliminates the distractions of other projects and tasks because everything in the virtual office is dedicated to the project/task at hand. The messages, announcements, discussion groups, schedules, etc. are project oriented not application oriented (email - from everyone about everything, as an example)

Using the virtual office concept, the CEMS IV program manager was able to get the program back on tract, increase funding due to stakeholder buy in and support, improve program usage by getting users the information they needed when they needed. The virtual office concept will work even better today because of the new flexibility provided by the **INFORUM Virtual Center** to allow the *Center Owner* to update and change the office as required on the fly without having to wait for the IT department to tell him "What, When and How" they can make the improvements he needs.