Chapter 24


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ABSTRACT

This book chapter formulates a framework for Government 2.0 development and implementation, drawing from literature on collaborative public management, public sector knowledge management, management Information Systems, innovation, and e-governance. This framework encompasses policy/managerial, organizational, and technological dimensions and identifies factors for success, such as supporting policy guidance and institutions, providing incentives and resources, and developing and promoting technical standards. Using the proposed framework, this chapter critically analyzes the possibility of Government 2.0 for the case of the United States. The analysis underscores the importance of institutional support, management commitment, and development of data standards and resource framework documents. The analysis also points to the need for improvement in the areas of provision of policy and management guidance, sustaining resource commitment, and expanding technical standards development and usability. The conclusion will summarize main points and make note of future research opportunities.

INTRODUCTION

One of the central issues that electronic governance and cross-boundary collaboration need to confront in the next decade is the rise of Government 2.0. The emergence of Government 2.0 results from the rapid growth of Web 2.0 technologies and the government deployment of these technologies for creating public value. The last two to three years have witnessed rapid growth in the use of Web 2.0 technologies. Web 2.0 technologies, broadly defined, include RSS, video-sharing, wikis, blogs, mash-ups, social networking, twitting, and virtual worlds, among others. The popularity of social networking sites, where many Web 2.0 technologies are being deployed, is indicative of
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the general trend. For example, by the end of 2009, the number of registered Facebook users in the United States reached 100 million, in a country of 310 million. The use of social networking sites has been gaining momentum outside the United States, with the number reaching 250 million by the end of 2009. The number of registered Facebook users grew to 500 million by the end of July, 2010, which is a growth of over 40 percent within a six–month period. In China, which in June 2008 became the country with the largest Internet population, the number of Internet users reached 384 million by the end of 2009. There are no official statistics on the number of users for social networking sites in China. However, some statistics suggest a strong presence of social networking activities in China. There are over 100 million users of RenRen and over 300 million users of Qzone.

The government use of Web 2.0 is also on the rise as citizens and businesses adopt Web 2.0 technologies to interact with one another. The title of the United Nations’ 2008 e-government survey report, “Connected Governance”, captured the essence of this new chapter in interactivity and engagement. It is where all stakeholders involved in public affairs are connected. However, Government 2.0 goes beyond simple applications of Web 2.0 technologies in government. What makes these applications work is a fundamental shift in beliefs concerning the role of government. These beliefs include (a) that governmental action should be open and transparent and citizens should be informed about government programs and their effects; and (b) that government should collaborate with citizens and businesses when trying to solve public policy and services problems.

Progress toward Government 2.0 is a journey that various national governments have recently begun to consider, and some have even begun to undertake. As of summer 2010, most countries that have embarked on the journey of Government 2.0 are still in the early phases of experimenting. This early effort has focused on the public value created by Government 2.0. For example, Australia has considered combining public sector information with government openness and collaboration with citizens. And the European Commission has researched the potential use of Web 2.0 for government functions, such as regulation and service provision (Osimo, 2008). These two examples of movement towards Government 2.0 also highlight the importance of transparency, collaboration, and innovation as core cultural elements of government.

With regards to Government 2.0 implementation, the United States is leading the effort, and it is uniquely positioned to do so for the following reasons. First, it has a long institutional tradition of open government, specifically with regulations such as the Freedom of Information Act and the Administrative Procedure Act. A comparative analysis has highlighted the uniqueness of such an institutional tradition (Chen & Hsieh, 2009). Second, the United States has an active and large population that is already using Web 2.0 technologies. Lastly, the Obama Administration’s commitment to open government as articulated in its Open Government Initiative has mobilized the resources for Government 2.0 implementation.

Government 2.0 has met with many challenges even with its short history of experimentation and implementation. On a deeper level are institutional and infrastructure issues. A country needs to have supporting laws, regulations, and political institutions that can facilitate an open exchange between government and citizens, as well as among citizens. A critical mass of online population with access to Web 2.0 technologies is the basic infrastructure requirement. As a new paradigm, a successful Government 2.0 program requires significant changes in organizational culture and business practices—in short, sustained political and managerial support is necessary. Finding the resources to produce Government 2.0 content and manage interactivity is a significant challenge. Moreover, the legal, policy, and technical infrastructure implications are still under debate. For