Chapter XII

Knowledge-Driven Project Management in Government Transformation

Yannis Charalabidis
National Technical University of Athens, Greece

Demetrios Sarantis
National Technical University of Athens, Greece

Dimitris Askounis
National Technical University of Athens, Greece

ABSTRACT

As implementation projects for transforming e-government mature, the need for successfully tackling project management emerges: without a project management method, those who commission an e-government project, those who manage it and those who work on it will not have the necessary tools to plan, organise, monitor, and reschedule tasks, responsibilities and milestones. In taking forward both the Government Modernisation and the Civil Service Reform agendas, renewed emphasis is being placed on project management approaches and techniques for achieving policy objectives more effectively and efficiently. The present chapter, after giving an overview of state-of-the-art project management methodologies, goes further in indicating the needs of the e-government domain and proposing a goal-driven way to manage all the aspects of e-government projects. Specifically designed tools support the application in a lighthouse project of the Greek public sector, leading to reusable conclusions on achievements and problems faced.
INTRODUCTION

Government transformation programmes and projects are usually shaped in a way to reduce government costs, improve delivery of public services, increase transparency, increase engagement of citizens in public matters, or achieve better outcomes in major policy areas (such as education, employment, taxation, health, or social security). The success of such large scale coordinated attempts depends on how well they are able to satisfy their objectives, usually delivering the promised quality within predicted time and calculated effort. The transformational nature, the large scale and the involvement of a large number of function-oriented officials are the key factors that usually make e-government projects more complex than usual IT projects (OECD, 2003).

The inability of governmental organisations to successfully complete public information technology projects threatens to undermine efforts to implement e-government. In parallel, an increasing number of countries formulate ambitious action plans for implementing e-government. Their aim is to move service delivery to the World Wide Web, to enhance information to citizens and to make public sector workplaces smarter for the benefit of citizens, politicians and civil servants alike. As OECD (2001) states “Unless governments learn to manage the risks connected with large public IT projects, these e-dreams will turn into global nightmares. Governments must get the fundamentals of IT right if they want to harvest the huge potential of going online”.

E-government project failures are all too common - some make the headlines, but most of them are quickly forgotten. A survey of e-government projects in developing and transition economies revealed that as many as 85 percent are a partial (unattained goals) or total (abandoned implementation) failure (Heeks 2003a). The reasons for failure are many and varied. Common reasons include: lack of internal ownership, absence of vision or strategy, poor project management, inadequate technological infrastructure and obstacles to data interchange (Heeks, 2003b). Lack of a business case for the project, over reliance on technology as the main driver for e-government, and lack of sufficient administrative reform to accompany e-government are also cited (Schware, 2004).

As implementation projects for transforming government mature and tend to become closely interrelated, the need for successfully tackling project management emerges: without a project management method, those who commission an e-government project, those who manage it and those who work on it will not have the necessary tools to plan, organise, monitor and re-schedule tasks, responsibilities and milestones. In taking forward both the government modernisation and the civil service reform agendas, renewed emphasis is being placed on project management approaches and techniques, for achieving policy objectives more effectively and efficiently. High level government officials indicate though that their needs do not conclude at asking for a different systematic approach, able to realise the domain specificities, but go further in demanding a tool able to carry forward good practices in e-government transformation and support the reuse of already travelled pathways. Those involved will not be clear about how much responsibility, authority and accountability they have and, as a result, there will often be confusion surrounding the project. Without a project management method projects are rarely completed on time and within acceptable cost, especially in large e-government projects.

Knowledge is wasted moving from one government transformation project to the other. As stated in (Heeks, 2003c), failures are not exploited to point the way for a better design and lessons are not developed. Even though success cases exist, they are not properly analysed in order to capitalise the gained knowledge and utilise it in future attempts.

National governments cope with considerable challenges trying to locate the right pathway of