ABSTRACT

Governments around the world have come to recognize the potential of new Information and Communication Technologies (ICT’s) to reshape the ways in which they interact with citizens, businesses and other key stakeholders, hence the current move towards e-Government. A major goal of e-Government initiatives is to improve the quality of public service delivery through providing individuals and organizations with a coherent interface with government that has to be organized around their needs rather than the structure of government bodies. To that end, many governments have begun applying to their e-Government strategies the commercial concept commonly referred to as “Customer Relationship Management” (CRM), thus generating a new field of knowledge and related applications. This chapter discusses some of the key issues to implementing CRM in e-Government. It lays particular stress on the CRM capabilities of identifying and differentiating users, promoting take-up of e-Government and measuring the progress against its stated objectives. The conceptual framework will also be related to a case-study dealing with the Italian Revenue Agency, responsible for collecting tax and customs duties for government, which is developing a rich CRM program along with an ICT re-engineering process.

1. INTRODUCTION

The e-Economy has dramatically transformed the expectations of individuals and organizations towards service delivery. One-to-one, 24x7, cross-organizational, multichannel services, shaped by leading-edge customer service organizations, are now expected to be made available in a range of contexts, including interactions with Governments.

Governments worldwide are responding to these expectations of customer service through developing rich e-Government programs.
E-Government has been defined in various ways. Drawing on global sources, definitions of e-Government range from «utilizing the Internet and the world-wide web for delivering government information and services to citizens» ¹ to «the use by governments agencies of information technology (such as Wide Area Networks, the Internet, and mobile computing) that have the ability to transform relations with citizens, businesses and other arms of government» ². In a more comprehensive way, the OECD defines e-Government as «the use of information and communication technologies, and particularly the Internet, as a tool to achieve better government (…) by enabling better policy outcomes, higher quality services, greater engagement with the citizens and by improving other key inputs identified»³. Also, the Gartner Group refers to e-Government as «the continuous optimization of service delivery, constituency participation, and governance by transforming internal and external relationships through technology, the Internet and the new media»⁴.

The common theme behind these definitions is that e-Government involves using new information and communication technologies (ICT’s) to improve and increase the ways in which governments interact with their stakeholders.

It should also be noted that e-Government does not equate to e-Governance, since “governance”, on the one hand, and “government”, on the other, point to different aspects of the relationship between government and its stakeholders. Governance stresses the way in which decisions are made, while government stresses the way in which these decisions are carried out: delivery of a service is a function of government, while determining whether or not to provide a service relates to governance. Accordingly, e-Government relates to the provision of government information and transactions using electronic means, whereas e-Governance is «a technology-mediated relationship between citizens and their governments from the perspective of potential electronic deliberation over civic communication, over policy evolution, and in democratic expression of citizen will»⁵.

e-Government initiatives fall into three categories relating to the main types of interactions it can be applied to, namely: Government-to-Citizens, Government-to-Business and Government-to-Government.

Not detracting from the importance of Government-to-Government and Government-to-Business, this chapter will focus primarily on Government-to-Citizen applications of e-Government.

A major goal of e-Government initiatives worldwide is to improve the quality of service delivery to constituents. In order to achieve this goal, many governments have begun applying to their e-Government strategies the commercial concept commonly referred to as “Customer Relationship Management”, thus generating a new field of knowledge and related applications.

However, the adoption of CRM in (e)Government and understanding the resultant advantages is in its relative infancy. So, there is still much to be learned on the subject and it is indeed what drives the current research.

**Research Objectives and Methodology**

This research is conceptual in nature and aims to contributing to the current knowledge on the strategies that government organizations undergoing e-Transformations should develop in order to manage the impact of these initiatives on the relationship with their “customers”. More specifically, the objective of this chapter is to highlight the potential of e-Government, if coupled with a systematic and strategic customer relationship management process, to be an enabler of better service delivery.
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