Moving from E-Government to T-Government:
A Study of Process Reengineering Challenges in a UK Local Authority Context

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ABSTRACT

The UK government is striving towards a vision for government-wide transformation, in which local authorities and central government departments are endeavouring to work with each other to deliver better services to citizens via a one-stop-shop environment for all services under the guise of electronic government (e-government). Having successfully e-enabled customer facing processes, the UK government is now working towards reengineering and e-enabling back office processes and information systems to facilitate more joined-up and citizen centric e-government services; these efforts are referred to as the transformational stage of e-government or T-Government. This paper seeks to explore what T-Government means to local authorities in the UK and what process related challenges have to be overcome to successfully implement transformational change in local government.

Keywords: citizens; integration; process reengineering; t-government

INTRODUCTION

Since the advent of the Internet some forty years ago (Ho, 2002), the number of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) driven services have quadrupled making today’s society a technology and Internet savvy one. The Internet has enabled businesses to trade and offer services using ICT to respond to consumer needs around the clock and from any location. While the 1990s saw the internet enabled e-commerce revolution with private and multinational organizations, in the new millennium we have witnessed public sector organizations embracing the same principles of e-business through the introduction of national
Electronic Government (e-government) initiatives. Since the mid 1990s ICT has played an important role in incrementally changing and shifting traditional and bureaucratic government models into the current e-government model where services are delivered according customers’ needs (Wimmer, 2004). The drivers for e-government broadly include improving internal cost and management efficiencies, encouraging citizen participation, promoting economic development and improving overall governance (Schware et al., 2003; Gandhi and Cross, 2001; Lee et al., 2005). All developed countries have now implemented some form of e-government (Al-Kibsi et al. 2001; Palanisamy, 2004; Accenture 2005) – with most having implemented transactional level services (See for instance Layne and Lee, 2001; Weerakkody et al., 2007); and the majority of developing countries are beginning to follow suit (Karunanada and Weerakkody, 2006). E-government is seen as no longer an option but a necessity for all countries aiming for better and efficient governance (Gupta and Jana, 2003).

With the popularity of e-government growing, various researchers have offered different definitions to explain the concept (Seifert and Petersen, 2002; Holden et al., 2003). However, these definitions differ according to the varying e-government focus and are usually centered on technology, business, process, citizen, government or a functional perspective. For instance, Seifert and Petersen (2002) explains e-government with a functional focus; Burn and Robins (2003) defines it with a citizens focus; Zhiyuan (2002) views e-government with a technology focus; Wassenaar (2000) classifies it with a business focus; Wimmer and Traumuller (2000) takes a more government centered view; and Bonham et al. (2001) defines it with a process focus. In essence therefore, e-government is about the transformation of internal and external processes of government using information and communication technologies to provide efficient and user focused services to citizens, businesses and other stakeholders (Lee and Hong, 2002; Gupta and Jana, 2003; Evans, 2003; Basu, 2004; Gandhi and Cross, 2001; Burn et al., 2003; Stoltzfus, 2004).

Many researchers have proposed various stages of e-government development (Layne and Lee, 2001; Siau and Long, 2005). These stages revolve mainly around four phases, which are web presence, interaction, transaction and transformation (Baum and Di Maio, 2001; Balutis, 2001; Layne and Lee, 2001). The transformational phase of e-government implementation (or T-Government) is the highest level of maturity for e-government programmes, thus it is also the most challenging phase to reach (Layne and Lee, 2001). The transformation phase encompasses redefining the delivery of government services by providing a single point of contact to citizens that makes the government completely transparent to citizens and businesses (Affisco and Soliman, 2006). To realise the aforementioned and to provide citizens with seamless services, e-government will therefore need business processes that can be continuously optimized and expanded outside the enterprise and outside internal enterprise systems (Fagan, 2006; Fustes, 2003a; Champy, 2002). However, many researchers such as Lee et al., 2005, Holden et al., (2002), Layne and Lee (2001), and Sarikas and Weerakkody, (2007) identified that most e-government initiatives often stagnate at the transaction stage of development; only a few will succeed to offer sophisticated, value added and truly efficient and transparent online services using a single point of contact. The reason being that the transformation stage of e-government will only be achieved when the different participating agencies collaborate, streamline their business processes and integrate systems that have been historically fragmented (Hu et al., 2006; Weerakkody et al., 2007). Therefore, in order for e-government to progress to a high level of information systems and technology (IS/IT) and process integration, governments will need to radically transform most public sector agencies.

In most countries the focus of the early stages of e-government has been to e-enable existing front office processes in their current state without significant improvements or ef-

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