Chapter X
The Governance of Integrated Service Delivery in Canada: An Examination of Service Canada’s New Business Model

Jeffrey Roy
Dalhousie University, Canada

ABSTRACT

The emergence of the Internet has given rise to internal connectivity and external, online delivery as centrepieces of both the public and private sector service strategies alike. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a critical assessment of both the Canadian federal government’s experience to date and the prospects of success for Service Canada – the new lead entity for citizen-centred service delivery in a multi-channel environment. Our primary interest lies in better understanding the organizational (managerially and politically) dimensions to this transformation and the extent to which these dimensions are well aligned in a suitable governance framework that encompasses shifting patterns of service delivery at both the federal level, and for the Canadian public sector as a whole. The Service Canada experience to date illustrates the governance complexities surrounding the introduction and pursuit of e-services and more integrated service delivery. More than a technological challenge, the realization of a new business model is the primary challenge in succeeding.

INTRODUCTION

The emergence of the Internet as a mainstream venue for communications and commerce over the past decade has given rise to online delivery mechanisms as a centrepiece of both the public and private sector service strategies alike. With regards to the public sector, the e-government agenda has come to denote the broad application of new information and communication technologies (ICTs) to the public sector as a whole. In most countries, however, e-service delivery denotes the chronological starting point and the
main strategic impetus for operationalizing the Internet for public sector usage.

An early empirical review of integrated service delivery strategies in Canada puts forth the following three challenges and three success factors (Institute for Citizen-Centred Service [ICCS], 2003). In terms of challenges, differences in organizational culture, partnerships, and resources are identified: for critical success factors, leadership, governance and accountability and partnerships are underlined as most important. Given the level of inter-organizational and intra-organizational linkages at play in achieving service transformations, it is appropriate that partnerships be identified in both sets.

It is within such a context that the Government of Canada (GOC) provides unique insight into the challenges of online and multi-channel service delivery. Recognized by organizations such as the United Nations, the OECD and Accenture Consulting as a leading jurisdiction in online service capacities, Canada began its second major phase of service delivery transformation in 2005 with the creation of Service Canada. Building on the foundation of its predecessor, Government Online (GOL), Canada’s flagship e-government initiative launched in 1999, Service Canada’s mission is to expand integrated service delivery capacities (in terms of both service offerings and delivery channels) across government in order to realize more citizen-centric outcomes.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a critical assessment of both the Canadian federal government’s experience to date and the prospects for Service Canada to succeed. In doing so, our primary interest lies in better understanding the organizational (managerially and politically) dimensions to this transformation and the extent to which these dimensions are both addressed and well aligned within the federal government apparatus. Accordingly, the notion of a business model is adopted as a framing concept and examined within the context of Service Canada’s own efforts.

The chapter is organized as follows. Section two contextualizes the case study by reviewing the main contours of new service models in this emergent e-government era. Section three sketches the Canadian context by describing the evolution of electronic service delivery over the past decade. Section four then examines the concept of a business model and Service Canada’s formulation of a business model for integrated service delivery. Section five considers three quandaries that have emerged from efforts to realize this new business model and section six provides some concluding thoughts as to lessons learned.

**ELECTRONIC SERVICE DELIVERY AND THE NEW GOVERNANCE IMPERATIVE**

A useful point of departure is to conceptually define e-government as *the continuous innovation in the delivery of services, citizen participation, and governance through the transformation of external and internal relationships by the use of information technology, especially the Internet.* Within this wide lens three images of e-government – in terms of the underlying objectives, have been well summarized by Remmen (2004) in the following manner: i) efficiency - cost reductions; ii) public service - better quality, easier access (i.e. 24/7), new services; and iii) democracy - participation and interactive dialogue. Since for most public sector leaders the initial impetus for thinking about online dimensions to government operations came from the ‘service’ dimension, this chapter situates the nature of e-government’s evolution primarily within and between the first two of these images – efficiency and public service reform. Nonetheless, the relevance of democracy remains as key contextual dimension of any public sector restructuring.

The private sector is also an important reference point. The widening scope of digital technologies means that few, if any, industries
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