Chapter VI

Soft Success Factors for M-Government

Eugenio Capra, Politecnico di Milano, Italy
Chiara Francalanci, Politecnico di Milano, Italy
Clementina Marinoni, Fondazione Politecnico di Milano, Italy

Abstract

This chapter proposes a reference “soft” competence framework to support both the implementation of m-government actions and the management of related organizational changes. Our framework focuses on organizational factors and competences that act as enablers of successful e-government and m-government implementation, and has been tested by means of an empirical analysis carried out in the major European countries. E-government and m-government policies are analyzed according to this framework, which is based on several dimensions, including centralization, involvement, leadership, learning, and soft skills. Key success factors are discussed and validated by empirical evidence. Finally, two significant cases of m-government projects, one successfully implemented and the other about to be implemented, are presented. Furthermore, the chapter aims at showing how soft factors are crucial for the success of m-government initiatives.
Introduction

Companies and institutions increasingly feel the need for strong organizational frameworks and soft skills, that is, behavioral and managerial skills to be integrated with technical competences (Spencer & Spencer, 1993). The importance of soft factors for e-government development has been recently discussed (CoBrA, 2004; OECD, 2003b). The Information Society Directorate-General of the European Commission (2004) has defined e-government as “the use of information and communication technologies in public administrations combined with organizational change and new skills in order to improve public services and democratic processes and strengthen support to public policies”.

From a more technical point of view, the UN (United Nations, 2003) has defined e-government as the process by which public administration transforms internal and external relationships with the use of modern information and communication technology (ICT).

In fact, the concept of e-government has been evolving in order to satisfy customers of public administrations by leveraging all the existing ICT technologies and channels. Mobile government, also referred to as m-government, is the extension of e-government to mobile platforms, as well as the strategic use of government services and applications which are only possible using cellular/mobile telephones, laptop computers, personal digital assistants and wireless internet infrastructure (Hutchinson Encyclopedia, http://encyclopedia.thefreedictionary.com/M-government).

A broader definition is provided by Kushchu and Kuscu (2003), who defined m-government as a strategy and its implementation involving the utilization of all kinds of wireless and mobile technology, services, applications, and devices for improving benefits to the parties involved in e-government including citizens, businesses, and all government units.

Mobile devices and technologies allow to provide citizens with a more complete, flexible and pervasive service. Multi-channel service is a way to establish a new and closer relationship with users, as they can choose the most convenient medium to interact with the public administration (Bracchi & Mainetti, 2005).

Accordingly, m-government is not a replacement for e-government, rather it complements and completes it. As a successful implementation of e-government requires organizational change and new skills, according to the definition of ISDG reported earlier, m-government too requires at least the same focus. In fact, m-government leads to new services and relationships, which need a deep internal re-organization. Consequently, most of the considerations about soft factors which apply to e-government apply to m-government too, as it may be considered an extension of it.
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