E-Government Service Delivery Performance: An Adaptation of the Balanced Scorecard to the Public Sector

Assion Lawson-Body, University of North Dakota, USA
Jared Keengwe, University of North Dakota, USA
Laurence Mukankusi, University of North Dakota, USA
Abdou Illia, Eastern Illinois University, USA
Glenn Miller, University of North Dakota, USA

ABSTRACT

E-government service delivery performance has been discussed in literature as a way governments use information technologies (IT) to deliver valuable services to their citizens at a lower cost. This article examines the effectiveness of Web site-supported Balanced Scorecard’s four dimensions (innovation and learning, internal process, veteran value proposition, and financial) in improving e-government service delivery performance. The study used content analysis to analyze the data obtained from a sample of 19 county veteran service officers (CVSOs) to test the hypotheses. CVSOs use Web sites to serve veterans on a Government-to-Citizen (G2C) basis.

Keywords: balanced scorecard approach; citizen access; e-learning; electronic government; electronic services; online government; online performance; public sector; veterans; Web site content

INTRODUCTION

Financial accounting measurements are extensively used to evaluate government performance (Hsu, 2005; Wright, Smith, Jesser, & Stupeck, 1999), but they do not reveal adequately the benefits of investing in IT. Financial accounting measurements do inform managers of historical outcomes, but they do not indicate why those results were achieved or what managerial actions have to be performed to improve future results (Wright et al., 1999). Because the excessive reliance on financial accounting performance measurements is inadequate and can be misleading, Wright et al. (1999) suggested a Balanced Scorecard theory as a consistent performance measurement tool for
the use of IT, Internet and electronic service (e-service). Despite the problems encountered by Internet users over the last years, there has been a continually increasing interest in the use of the internet for electronic service deliveries (Levenburg & Klein, 2006). This increasing interest has led governments to provide citizens with new electronic services (Kvasny & Keil, 2006; Levenburg & Klein, 2006).

In government, IT and information are public property, not a proprietary resource to be protected and exploited for competitive advantage (Carter & Belanger, 2005; Dufner, Halley, & Reed, 2002); therefore, performance measurement is important to assess e-government efforts. A government needs to track what is working and what is not and assure citizens that the government’s time and funds are being well spent (Stowers, 2004). Some traditional performance measures may be appropriate for e-government, but e-government service is different in its delivery modes and expectations. E-government service delivery applications are relatively new and government service providers and researchers can only learn so much from traditional cost-benefit analyses. Therefore, new performance measures need to be developed to provide accountability for jurisdictions’ e-government efforts. In addition, the significance of aligning the usability of Web sites with government service delivery strategies is widely recognized (Griffith, Sawyer, & Neale, 2003), but the lack of appropriate methodologies prevents government units and their constituents from integrating Web site projects with e-government service delivery performance.

The early experiences of companies using Balanced Scorecard have demonstrated that it meets several managerial needs (Kaplan & Norton, 1992; Pandey, 2005). The Balanced Scorecard serves as a management tool for the following purposes (Wright et al., 1999): 1) identifying the performance drivers that affect electronic service delivery and 2) establishing a set of cause-and-effect relationships among business performance factors (Hsu, 2005). Therefore, Balanced Scorecard is not only a tool for performance assessment, but also a key driver to a business organization’s success (Hsu, 2005).

This article addresses the issue of delivering electronic services using the concept of an accepted management tool—the Balanced Scorecard. In other words, the Web site-supported Balanced Scorecard dimensions may be used to improve e-government service delivery performance. Like many other innovative technologies, government Web sites can generate sustainable electronic service delivery performance if the technology is used for improving the operational efficiency of government services.

Various ways to categorize e-government exist. Some authors classify e-government into six categories: Government to individuals as a part of a delivery system (G2C), Government to individuals as a part of the political process (G2IP), Government to business as a citizen (G2BC), Government to business in the marketplace (G2BMKT), Government to employees (G2E), and Government to government (G2G) (Carter & Belanger, 2005). This research deals with G2C e-government, focusing on government Web sites that county veterans service officers (CVSOs) use to deliver electronic services to veterans. Veterans are the nation’s population who have been discharged or retired after serving active duty with the United States Armed Forces. CVSOs are county employees. Veterans interact with CVSOs when requesting government benefits or having questions about them.

This article is organized as follows. Section II contains the description of the Balanced Scorecard theory. In Section III, government service delivery performance is examined. In Section IV, the research model and hypotheses are presented. In Section V, the methodology is outlined. In Section VI, the results and findings are examined. In Section VII, the discussion of this article is presented. In Section VIII, the conclusion is presented.
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