Chapter 30

From E-Government to E-Governance: Winning People’s Trust

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ABSTRACT

With the e-Government concept, government services, which were normally delivered from physical infrastructures of public offices, now move closer to the clients via Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Recent advancement of mobile computing devices has made the idea of omnipresent government highly likely where the government services can be accessed by everyone anytime-anywhere. This chapter begins with the discussion of the current development of e-government followed by the evolution of e-government models. The chapter also addresses how the good governance features have been incorporated as guiding principles in e-governance practices in different societies in recent years. Finally, as its focal interest, the chapter examines and analyzes the issue of building people’s trust through e-governance. Elements of trust are discussed thoroughly, and a trust model for e-governance is put forth and proposed as a guideline to develop a trusted e-governance system.

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INTRODUCTION

The use of information technology (IT) in government institutions is not a new phenomenon. Prior to the development of the Internet and the World Wide Web (the Web), IT was used to store and process data (especially for statistical purposes), supporting government operations and to some extent to support in decision making. The use of the Internet for communication by government institutions, especially in the North America and Europe, is not new either. It was governments, research institutions and universities that use the Internet, especially through applications such as email, file transfer and remote login before the business communities actually acquired it. However, the use of information and communication technology (ICT), was merely for internal operations, meaning that citizens and businesses need to visit government offices in order to process their government related matters such as registrations, certificates, licenses and others.

With the development of the Web in early 1990s, the opportunity to provide better delivery service via the Web to citizens and businesses was recognized and the term e-government was widely discussed in the late 1990s and 2000s. The developed countries, where the computerization of administrative processes are well developed, quickly embraced e-government and developed electronic services to citizens and businesses via their websites or portals. The developing countries also joined the bandwagon, observing and realizing that through e-government they could improve government efficiency and provide better services to citizens and possibly cut the cost of service operation in the long run. Some governments identify e-government as one of the key factors in enhancing their competitive advantage.

E-government is an evolutionary process that started with using ICT in government to improve business processes in government organizations as well as to provide better services to its stakeholders. As such, e-government can be considered as a concept of using ICT as ways to not only organizing and managing but also facilitating government’s administrative processes, especially the interactive processes between government and public. However, proper government services can only be materialized if the interactive processes (front-end processes) are linked or integrated with the related administrative or business processes (back-end processes).

The main concern of computerization of administrative process in government is efficiency. With improved efficiency of administrative processes, service delivery can be improved and enhanced. With the Web, service delivery can be further improved significantly, since services can be accessed anywhere-anytime. However, improving service delivery through the Web requires the transformation of government processes to get benefit of the Web capability. The transformation process starts off with the critical review of existing processes followed by process improvement or process reengineering depending on how far the process of improvement is expected, as well as the capacity and capability of the government organizations in managing the changes resulting from the transformation.

In essence, improving government service delivery through the Web is definitely not a simple matter, although technology to support the delivery is widely available. It needs a careful plan, coordination, leadership and proper management (including change management) to make sure the transformation process can be successfully implemented. In other words, it is not merely putting “e” to “government”, it requires fundamental re-think of how to organize and integrate the various processes in a way to achieve superb delivery services electronically in a one-stop service entity (portal). Eventually, e-government should be directed to achieve citizen-centric and most importantly the involvement of citizens in the government affairs (participatory governance) to help the citizens improve their lives and to