Chapter 14
Botswana's e-Government Programme:
The Case for a Multi-Stakeholder e-Trust Model

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ABSTRACT

Although Botswana has realised the importance of e-Government, its acceptance by citizens, the private sector, Community Based Organisations (CBOs) and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) is essential. The acceptance will be an indication whether these three stakeholders have trust on e-Government. Trust, which is seen as critical to the acceptance of e-Government, normally centres on citizen trust and overlooks other key stakeholders in the e-Government process. Using Botswana as a case study, this chapter proposes a multi-stakeholder e-Government trust model which focuses on citizen trust and trust perspectives from the government, private sector, CBOs and CSOs. The multi-stakeholder trust model stimulates governments to be mindful of trust and how it permeates the acceptance of e-Government.

INTRODUCTION

Botswana has made remarkable investment towards creating an effective e-Government environment. The investment in e-Government was meant to facilitate making government citizens-centric which Carbo (2007) suggests can be achieved through three phases. Phase 1 entails publishing information though the aid of

Information Communication Technology (ICT) with a view to improve access to information. Publishing information through ICT denotes that substantial investment has to be made on the acquisition, servicing and roll-out of technology and in developing e-content strategies and ensuring that content is uploaded and is always up-to-date. The next phase facilitates interaction between government and users of the published informa-

tion and other e-services. That is, users should be in a position to effectively make use of the published information as well as utilise e-services that are made available to them. For effectual use and subsequent interaction to take place, there is need for investment in training users and providers of the services and information. Phase 3 is meant to ensure that the information which is availed through the ICT is being used and so are the e-services, there is some form of transaction resulting from access to the published information and the services that are offered online. The last phase focuses on seeing to it that the information which is on-line and related e-services will help transform for the better the lives of users. All these are premised on the willingness of governments to invest substantially in e-Government infrastructure and related requirements. Of equal importance, is the stakeholders' willingness to use the resultant e-Government services. Crucial among the determinants of stakeholder acceptance and willing to use e-services is trust

This chapter argues that investment alone will not lead to effective e-Government services in Botswana. Instead, the government of Botswana, as part of developing an e-Government strategy, should vie to put together a framework that would engender trust in e-Government services. Where trust exists and is sustained, there is likelihood that citizens will be willing to adopt and use e-services and any public information made available online (Carter & Bélanger, 2005). This would in turn encourage government to make additional investments. The trust environment so created should entice and encourage formation of public-private partnerships that would lead to further investments.

Methodology

This chapter is largely based on a desk study of literature from various sources. The study is also partly based on the authors' observations on the e-Government sector in Botswana.

E-Government: A Conceptual Understanding

Okpaku (2003) defines e-Government as the "adoption, by governments at local, provincial, state and national levels, of information and communications technology applications in the delivery of administrative products and services to the widest possible population and geographic spread" Okpaku identifies the objectives of e-Government as essentially being "to make governance more efficient, more cost-effective, more responsive to the will and needs of the people, more responsible and accountable, more accessible, and more affordable". The overarching goal for e-Government service delivery platforms is to "overcome the handicap of inadequate infrastructure and financial resource constraints both of which limit government's ability to reach and deliver to the average citizen without that citizen having to go through extraordinary efforts to access civil services. And that ultimately e-Government "should enable administrations to make better use of scarce financial, human and other resources, resulting in an increase in the portion of such resources available to service critical needs such as food, education, health services and more"(Okpaku, 2003).

The understanding of e-Government by Okpaku tallies with that espoused by the government of Botswana in its portal which states that e-Government is "the use by Government agencies of information technologies (such as Wide Area Networks, the Internet and mobile computing) to transform relations with citizens, businesses, visitors and Government, for:

- enhanced delivery of Government services to citizens;
- improved interactions with the business community;
- citizen empowerment through access to information; and
- more efficient Government administration."

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