Project Management for Transformational eGovernment

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INTRODUCTION

Transformational eGovernment is the continuous innovation in the delivery of services, citizen participation, and governance through the transformation of external and internal relationships by the use of technology, especially on the Internet (Roy, 2006). When introduced, it offered the hope and promise to revitalize and modernize public services; reinvigorate and improve services to citizens, business, and governments; and create an exciting environment for employees to work and contribute. Countries world-wide are inexorably engaged and urged forward by both push-and-pull motivational pressures to use technology to improve democratic participation, social harmony, and economic sustainability.

While eGovernment's first decade has been much more transactional than transformational, radical changes affecting eGovernment are needed in this decade: culture, different services and relationships with all stakeholders; organizational arrangements; business processes; and resource management. But progress thus far achieved was not without struggle and transformational eGovernment success is far to the deficit side of the performance measurement scale. The eGovernment project failure rate is so high that transformational eGovernment progress is stalling (Aikins, 2012).

The objective of this chapter is to highlight the role of project management in the failure of eGovernment, and the opportunity for an enhanced modernized project management discipline to support and drive the needs of a successful international transformational eGovernment. The project management discipline itself is becoming more difficult due to the collaborative and networked nature of present day complicated eGovernment projects and the overwhelming bombardment of information – both useful and irrelevant. The need to work across organizations and jurisdictions and create solutions that are a product of progressive elaboration and negotiation is a new dimension to project management that was not so pervasive until citizen-focused transformational and innovative solutions were being developed. Aikins' 2012 text on *Managing E-Government Projects: Concepts, Issues and Best Practices* supports Roy's 2006 text on *Transformation for the Digital Age: E-Government in Canada* that the unrealized hopes in transformational eGovernment still remain. Aikins (2012) also supports government documentation as far back as 2006 in Canada (Fraser, 2006) and 2004 in the United Kingdom (BCS, 2004) that eGovernment should adopt a more concrete project management methodology (Aikins, 2012), and that one of the best practices is rigorous application of its methodology (Aikins, 2012). And through the use and application of the repetitive processes afforded by the application of these methodologies, project management excellence is achieved (Kerzner, 2001).

BACKGROUND

Transformational eGovernment has not been the success hoped for around the world and a number of the barriers preventing success have been identified and analyzed (Dawes, 2009; Nordfors, Ericson, Lindell, & Lapidus, 2009; Oxford Institute, 2007; Sharif & Irani, 2010; United Nations, 2008; United Nations, 2010; Weerakkody, Janssen,

& Dwivedi, 2011; World Bank, 2002; Ziemann & Loos, 2009). These include, but are not limited to, insufficient funding; people-related issues, including leadership and executive support; technology and infrastructure; cultural and organizational opposition; horizontal and collaborative working relationships; governance structures; the digital divide; security; procurement; interoperability; and citizen support and trust. It has been harder, slower, and more complicated to deliver than what was originally expected, specifically from a business transformational agenda (BCS Thought Leadership, 2005; Roy, 2006). Transformational eGovernment promised hope for government transformation, public sector renewal, and revitalization of the role of bureaucracies in the 21st century. eGovernment delivered primarily on the transactional success of using the Internet to allow citizens closer and more direct access to government programs (Weerakkody, Janssen, & Dwivedi, 2011); important and valuable, but not of the significance and benefit that was predicted. Transformational eGovernment remains slow and halting (Aikins, 2012) and shackled to the time-honored approaches of managing existing organizational assets rather than reaching out to create new management capacities that business transformation demands and technology affords.

Even in Canada, where eGovernment was rated by Accenture number one in the world for five years in a row (Accenture, 2005, 2006, 2007; Government of Canada Foreign Affairs and International Trade, 2006), it is seen as being primarily a transactional success as opposed to a transformational one (Roy, 2006). Internationally there has been a high and critical failure rate related to IT solutions (Aikins, 2012; Fraser, 2006). More recently, the failure in IT solutions that was the bane of transactional processing is now appearing in eGovernment initiatives (Aikins, 2012; Arif, 2008; Heeks, 2008; Janowski, Estevez, & Ojo, 2007). eGovernment failures are often hushed up (Heeks, 2003) and as Misuraca (2009) points out, the majority of eGovernment projects are failures as high as 70-80%; 85% in partial or total failures

according to Aikins (2012) and are not meeting the "messianic" expectations. Failures are costly; as per Irani, Al-Sebie, & Elliman (2006), the United Kingdom Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology reported that cancelled or over-budgeted eGovernment projects were greater than 1.5 billion British pounds.

There are a number of reasons for the lack of transformational eGovernment success, including unanticipated organizational opposition, difficulties in communicating requirements, and obstacles to obtaining information from different government departments and agencies (Kamal, Weerakkody, & Irani, 2011). However, there is some support for the belief that one of the most significant reasons for transformational eGovernment failure is ineffective project management (Aikins, 2012; Misuraca, 2009).

Project management, as derived from generic project management methodologies, is a systems approach to planning, scheduling, and controlling project activities; it began its modern accelerated growth in the 1960s (Kerzner, 2001). The systems approach creates a project management framework that is constructed from process groupings and knowledge areas. The implementation of this approach ensures that the work of project management activities is performed efficiently and effectively and is measured by such features as planning, cost, schedule management, scope control, and communications.

MAIN FOCUS

The first decade of eGovernment was a dot.com era of high hope and heavy promise (Roy, 2006). The advance of the Internet and the service delivery focus on the citizen, the major stakeholder, was supposed to modernize and transform the public service. The Internet and the "e" opportunities were to be the catalyst to change how governments work while changing their relationships with citizens. These changes were to be imbedded in every aspect of government operations and its

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