Implementation of an E-Government Initiative at Dreamland Municipality

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Dreamland is a city kingdom located in the Middle East. In the year 2000, the crown prince initiated the e-government initiative and all of the 27 government departments were asked to move 90% of their services online by the year 2007. Dreamland Municipality (DM), the biggest government department, started implementing the initiative in 2001. This paper presents the DM case, in which value-centric steps were taken that have lead to successful implementations and a high acceptance rate. These steps are: (1) development of performance indicators; (2) identification of high value services; (3) selection of services that are highly visible; (4) all inclusive service development; and (5) post-implementation support. Some of the major challenges faced by DM were: (1) customer involvement in service development; (2) raising awareness; (3) online transactions; (4) development of comprehensive performance indicators; (5) a lack of BPR, resulting in merely a digitization of existing processes; and (6) a non-strategic status of IT in the DM organizational structure.

Keywords: customer services; e-government implementation; e-services; implementation strategy

INTRODUCTION

E-government is gaining popularity worldwide. Virtual government is an ambitious goal that some researchers have been discussing for a few years now (Fountain, 2001). However, in the long run, the eventual success or failure of e-government will depend on the value that it adds to citizens’ lives and its government services, as well as the cost savings that can be achieved. Some of the values e-government can add
are (1) 24-hour and seven-day accessibility; (2) active citizen participation (Wimmer, 2002); (3) open government (an essential component of e-democracy); (4) public access to information (Doty & Erdelez, 2002); (5) avoidance of physical trips to government offices; and (6) avoidance by part of the government to maintain brick-and-mortar type facilities in order to handle citizen services (Kaylor et al., 2001). Literature is replete with success factors for implementing successful e-government systems. Some of these success factors include (1) ensuring ability to use required technologies (Borins, 2002); (2) educating citizens about the value of e-government (Jaeger & Thompson, 2003); and (3) developing methods and performance indicators. There are several challenges associated with e-government, as well. The General Accounting Office (GAO) report identifies these challenges as “1) sustaining committed executive leadership; 2) building effective e-government business cases; 3) maintaining a citizen focus; 4) protecting personal privacy; 5) implementing appropriate security controls; 6) maintaining electronic records; 7) maintaining a robust technical infrastructure; 8) addressing IT human capital concerns; and 9) ensuring uniform service to the public” (GAO, 2001).

Taking into account the success factors and staying within the constraints of the environment, value has to be planned into an e-government project. Benefit to customers and government itself can be enhanced, if value is planned properly into the project right from the beginning. It is critical to evaluate the extent to which e-government initiatives have to be implemented in order to harness maximum value from them. Knowing when to act is as important as knowing when not to act in e-government (Salem, 2003). This article presents an approach to planning values into an e-government project through a case study of a municipality. Due to the confidentiality concerns, the authors used Dreamland Municipality (DM) to represent the concerned municipality. The following section presents a literature review of some implementation methodologies and issues with them. Based on highlighted issues, a case is presented, documenting one of the alternatives that plan value in an e-government implementation process right from the planning phase.

IMPLEMENTATION METHODOLOGIES

Layne and Lee (2001) presented a four-stage model for implementation of e-government (see Figure 1).

The model proposes four sequential stages, which a government organization could go through in order to realize the full potential of e-government. As depicted in the model (Figure 1), the first stage of e-government implementation is the cataloging phase. At this stage, the government agencies announce their Web presence through uploading a Web site. Basic features provided at this stage are information and limited functionalities such as form downloads for citizens. The second stage is the transaction stage. At this stage, transactional capabilities are added to the Web site. A customer,