Chapter 9

New Communication Technology Integration:
Recommendations for Public Sector Change

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ABSTRACT

Communication is key in the public sector as governments aim to interact with and respond to their residents. Citizens often participated in government through face-to-face communication like town meetings. Today, digital communication has become increasingly important to improving government-citizen relations. The authors explore how governments are using Web 2.0 and mobile government (m-government) to spread information quickly. As governments implement these new communication tools, they must also consider ethical implications associated with technology. The research identifies the elements that lead to successful integration and the biggest barriers that government employees are facing during the transition.

INTRODUCTION

Communication innovations have historically played an important role in transforming cultures and governments. As the invention of the printing press led toward the Protestant Reformation, current information and communications technology (ICT) innovations are transforming how people interact with the public and nonprofit sectors (Shirky, 2008; Gore, 2007). Coming quickly upon the heels of the E-government (EG) service transformation of the 1990s, the more recent Web 2.0 and mobile government (m-government) innovations are once again challenging standard practices, structures, and policies (GAO, 2011; Shareef, Archer & Duda, 2012). New opportunities must be carefully balanced with ethical responsibilities to protect confidential information collected and stored online (GAO, 2011). The questions to be addressed here are as follows: What are the elements that lead toward successful new technology integration? How do organizational policies, management, and human resource structures impact the change?

Transformational ICTs, such as those used in e-government and Web 2.0, have increased access to information, resulting in greater public expectations for transparency and engaged participation, while also providing increased abilities for public outreach, advocacy, education, collaboration, service provision, and volunteer and financial support (Shirky, 2008; Pynes, 2009). Additionally, this technology can improve skill levels, lead to new business models, expand organizational capabilities, as well as create a culture that supports change and innovation (Ceric, 2015). The speed of innovation and the associated costs of keeping up with it have left many organizations struggling through an organizational digital divide caused by outdated or underutilized technology, restrictive cultures, and vague policies, especially at the local and state levels (Greene, 2011). However, as noted by the U.S. Chief Information Officer, the successful integration of the new technology tools will provide a large return on investment with even greater innovations in service provision and engagement (VanRoekel, 2011). Integrating such a large change calls for investments in system upgrades and focus on the development of new organizational policies and strategic human resources management cultures that embrace constant training and feedback (Bolman & Deal, 2008; VanRoekel, 2011). Successful technology implementation and communications transformation can only be realized with consistent leadership.

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