Chapter I
Key Issues in E-Government and Public Administration

Rhoda C. Joseph
School of Business Administration, USA

David P. Kitlan
School of Business Administration, USA

INTRODUCTION

Information and communication technologies (ICTs) are key elements supporting the growth of e-government initiatives. Public administration refers to the products and procedures that the government implements to interact with its constituents: citizens, businesses, employees, and other governments. To address the needs of these different constituents, a wide variety of government services are necessary. This chapter examines the impact of e-government on public administration from both the constituent and service perspectives. The chapter presents a holistic view of both challenges and advantages of implementing e-government in the area of public administration.

The discussion in this chapter will proceed as follows. Section 2 provides an overview of e-government. This section presents a classification of e-governments and also explains how typical e-government develops and looks at the wide variety of functions involved in public administration. Section 3 combines the areas of e-government and public administration and examines how closely and critically intertwined they are. The main advantages and challenges of implementing e-government projects to support public administration are also presented. Section 4 documents the future potential of e-government in public administration and discusses key issues such as e-voting and global access. Lastly the chapter concludes with a summary of ideas presented and some key terms and definitions.

BACKGROUND

This chapter examines the intersection between e-government and public administration. Each of these two areas represents a rich body of literature. In this section we first define e-government and its position in a global context. We then discuss the functions and goals of public administration. There is significant overlap between the goals of e-government and those of the public administration function.

Firstly, e-government refers to the use of electronic media (such as the Internet, intranets, hand-held devices) by governments to interact with

their constituents. "E-government can be viewed as the process for creating (adding) public value with the use of ICT (Capati-Caruso, 2006)." E-government projects occur at many levels throughout the world. Countries such as Canada, Singapore, and the United States are leading the charge as innovative leaders in e-government; with nations such as Brazil, South Africa, and Italy making important steps to increase their e-government infrastructure (Hunter & Jupp, 2001). E-government is a global phenomenon which is poised to see more growth in the future.

From a historical perspective electronic commerce (e-commerce) provides a referential platform for the development of e-government. E-commerce provides an electronic option for buyers and sellers to come together. The positive impacts of e-commerce include reduced search costs and improved price discovery (Bakos, 1998). Many e-government tasks are routine and non-commercial, however some of the benefits and challenges evident in the e-commerce domain also occur in the e-government domain.

Comparisons between e-commerce and e-government must be done cautiously. Even though they both use Web-based technologies and involve sharing information between two or more entities, significant differences persist. E-government deals with sensitive information (such as social services, taxes) that should not be made available to third party private for-profit businesses. The explicit goals of each application also conflict: e-commerce is used to drive revenue while e-government seeks to increase information sharing and task efficiencies.

E-government initiatives are classified based on the group that interacts with the government. Government-to-government (G2G) initiatives refer to governments interacting with other governments. One example can be a local municipality interacting with the state government for the payment or receipt of taxes. The movement of information from a lower level to a higher level of government is called vertical integration and is one of the more advanced characterizations of e-government. G2G also occurs horizontally where one department interacts with another equally significant branch of government. For example, there are projects that involve interaction between the department of transportation and the department of education (e.g., transit passes for school students).

Government-to-business (G2B) initiatives refer to communications and transactions facilitated by electronic means between a government and a representative business. A large part of the interaction between a government and for-profit businesses is through the collection of taxes, and bids on government contracts. In the non-profit domain, dissemination of grant requests and proposals represent more typical types of interaction. In either case, these are typical examples of the type of activities that are supported in the B2G domain.

Employees are the core of effective governance. Government-to-employee (G2E) initiatives cover the human resource management component of the relationship between the government and its employees. The three main benefits to be derived from the implementation of these types of projects are improved strategic planning; cost reduction; and service improvements between management and employees (Ruël, Bondarouk, & Looise, 2004). The tasks covered in the G2E domain range from online recruitment, training and testing, to self service systems where employees can modify their health plans, retirement plans and even federal withholdings.

The final group, and potentially the most critical one, is government-to-citizen (G2C). This refers to the government's interaction with the citizenry. A recent 22-country study indicated that governments around the globe identify that that a customer-centric focus is critical for e-government success (Hunter & Jupp, 2001). In areas with low Internet penetration, it might be the only area of focus for e-government projects because of the limited access. Citizens broadly refer to all individuals that interact with the government. G2C represents all electronic communications and transactions that occur between a government and one or more of its citizens. The individual referred to as "citizen" can be a foreign national, a student or a resident, and is typically involved with unique interactions with the government. Governments