Chapter VIII

# Information Technology as a Facilitator of Results-Based Management in Government

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## ABSTRACT

*The most widely accepted normative model of "good" public management is often called results-based management. It encourages planning and target setting to make the organization more proactive; an emphasis on outcomes to make the organization better focused on its mission; quick performance feedback to make the organization more responsive; and continuous process improvements to make the organization better able to serve its clients. These changes are possible only with supporting information technology. This chapter discusses ways that IT, including GIS, EIS, and intranets, can support the new management model. However, IT can increase management effectiveness only if its role has been carefully designed. Before implementing major IT changes, top public managers must begin by determining such policy issues as what information would best guide upcoming major decisions; what balance the agency wishes between internal information accessibility versus security; and how best to balance frontline worker empowerment versus the need for organizational uniformity.*

# INTRODUCTION

The role of information technology in government management has constantly evolved over the years. This evolution has generally been driven by changes in IT, as both software and hardware have rapidly improved. However IT's management role has recently been changing more rapidly, and this time it is because public management, at least as much as IT, has been changing. This chapter will discuss some of the ramifications of this new role for IT within public management. In the first of three sections, it will briefly describe the new normative model of best public management practices. Second, it will look at ways that IT can advance this new model. Third and finally, it will examine some policy issues that must be confronted when incorporating IT into public management systems.

# THE NEW MODEL OF PUBLIC MANAGEMENT
## The Changing Definition of "Good" Public Management

During the past decade, consultants, texts, academics, and professional societies have all combined to change the accepted definition of "good" public management. Twenty years ago, public managers who listened to their workers, kept their operations moving smoothly, and calmly handled occasional crises would often be considered outstanding managers by peers and by outsiders. Today such managers would likely be viewed as competent but disappointingly passive. To be seen as outstanding, today's managers must proactively move their agencies to higher levels of performance each year. The current normative model of public management calls upon managers to continuously improve their agency's performance by scanning their environment purposively and then using the resulting information to set agency targets for improved results, including improved customer satisfaction. The new model then suggests ways of flattening the organizational structure, streamlining its processes, and speeding up its feedback systems in order to help produce these continuously improving results.[1]

Confusingly, this single new model has been given at least three different names: results-based management, strategic management, and performance management. We will use the term "results-based management" in this chapter. (Adding to the confusion, a fourth term—New Public Management, or NPM— is also sometimes treated as a synonym. However, NPM is a broader concept that includes results-based management but then also adds a strong market emphasis, calling for more public entrepreneurship and in-

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