Implementing E-Government in Ireland: A Roadmap for Success

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ABSTRACT

E-government provides unparalleled opportunities for governments to streamline processes and improve customer service. As a result, achieving successful citizen centric e-government has become a key concern for many governments. This paper analyses the Irish Government's evolutionary path to the provision of successful e-Government. The success factors and stages of evolution of e-government are identified and a detailed examination of how the Irish Government successfully implemented its e-government strategy is presented. The lessons learnt from this case provide a valuable roadmap for the successful attainment of citizen centred e-government in other jurisdictions.

Keywords: e-government; portal; Ireland

INTRODUCTION

Information technology has had a long association with business, firstly as a provider of unprecedented efficiencies and secondly as an element of business strategy in its own right (Porter, 2001; Venkatraman, 1994). Through the use of electronic commerce technologies, public and private sector companies are challenged to redesign their processes in order to achieve the benefits of increased efficiencies, cost reductions and better customer service (Glassey, 2001; Warkentin, Gefen, Pavlou, & Rose, 2002).

The Internet is an important new technology as it provides better opportunities for companies to establish distinctive strategic positions than those offered by previous generations of information technology (Porter, 2001). It can provide opportunities for strategic advantage, cost savings and new revenue streams (Mahadevan, 2000). Consequently, Internet technologies bring challenges for public and private sector companies (Earl & Bushra, 2001).

Electronic commerce can be defined as the use of the Internet to conduct commercial transactions (Mahadevan, 2000). Electronic commerce is generally con-
ducted in three broad structures: portals, market makers, and product/service providers (Bakos, 1991; Mahadevan, 2000). The benefits of these structures to the supplier include lower costs and access to wider markets, while the advantages to the buyer are lower transaction costs, access to greater amounts of information and convenience of purchase (Porter, 2001).

Today, governments are using the Internet to provide public services to their citizens (Gouscos, Georgiadis, Martakos, & Stamoulis, 2001; Watson & Mundy, 2001). In so doing, governments aim to form better relationships with businesses and citizens by providing more efficient and effective services (Al-Kibisi, de Boer, Mourshed, & Rea, 2001; Layne & Lee, 2001; Warkentin et al., 2002). Governments can also use e-commerce to improve core business processes (Coulthard & Castleman, 2001; Lloyd, 2002).

This paper investigates the evolution of e-government in Ireland up to the summer of 2002. A review of the literature is presented which details the recognised success factors in e-government, the stages of e-government evolution and international e-government comparisons. A case study is presented detailing how the Irish Government’s e-government strategy was devised and implemented. The success of this implementation yields valuable insights into the identification and management of critical concerns during the evolvement and attainment of e-government. Cumulatively, these lessons provide a roadmap for the successful attainment of citizen-centric e-government. Specifically, the case details how in excess of 50 government authorities, both local and central, were brought together in order to provide a single point of access to government services.

**Electronic Government**

Electronic government is defined as the use of technology, particularly the Internet, as a means to deliver services to citizens, businesses and other entities (Tambouris, 2001; Watson & Mundy, 2001) with the purpose of providing convenient access to government information and services (Brannen, 2001; Gefen, Pavlou, Warkentin, & Rose, 2002). E-government has the potential to transform not only the way in which most public services are delivered, but also the fundamental relationship between government and citizen (Burn & Robbins, 2001; Watson & Mundy, 2001).

Operational benefits of e-government include continuous availability of service, a reduction in response time and a reduction in error rates (Al-Kibisi et al., 2001; Gouscos et al., 2001). These factors contribute to an increase in the efficiency of government (Coulthard & Castleman, 2001; Dearstyne, 2001; Lagroue, 2002).

**Critical Success Factors of Electronic Government**

Barriers to e-government include organizational, political and technical factors as they posit threats to achieving the benefits of integration of service delivery (Akbulut, 2002; Dawes, 1996). Redesigning services and improving their coor-
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