

Chapter 17

eGovernance: ICT and the Essential Roles of Knowledge Management and Learning Organization Behaviour for Good Governance

Jaro Berce

University of Ljubljana, Slovenia

Sam Lanfranco

York University, Canada

ABSTRACT

This chapter explores how to formulate an ICT-enabled eGovernance action plan, including the necessary components of (a) a knowledge management (KM) strategy, and (b) the adoption of a culture of learning organization (LO) behavior. This strategy is based on lessons learned from a model designed and tested on data from 140 Slovenian public agencies. Slovenia, a small transition economy newly admitted to the European Union, faces both its own demands and the demands of the EU for good governance. Slovenia offers lessons relevant for both developed and developing countries. There are three progressively complex stages when integrating information and communication technologies (ICT) into the operations of government. They start with the elementary process of integrating ICT into previously paper based governmental administrative systems (iGovernment), proceed to the online provision of government services to others (e-government), and finally arrive at online efforts to enhance accountability, consultation and transparency as part of good governance (eGovernance). This chapter concludes with the argument that successful eGovernance works hand-in-hand with e-democracy, whereas failed eGovernance will position eDemocracy as a force in opposition to the behaviour of Government.

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INTRODUCTION

Information and Communication technology (ICT) continues to be a powerful force in transforming the ways in which societies and economies operate. The widening use of ICT is having profound impacts on patterns of living, communicating and work. There are three stages in the integration of ICT into the operations of government. The first step, of course, is the task of securing adequate funds, expertise and knowledge to perform the technical integration of ICT into governmental structures and processes. Beyond those constraints of resources and expertise, the organizational challenges begin.

The first stage and moderate challenge (iGovernment) consists of using ICT to migrate previously paper-based internal governmental administrative systems to an electronic format. The second stage (eGovernment extends ICT integration into the provision of government services to the public, business and others. Central to both of these challenges is organizational change; adapting internal practices, and organizational structures. Administration and management structures are expanded to include the electronic space as part of their work venue, and to substitute electronic processes for existing paper and manual processes. These first two stages focus in enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of government, and of government services. Both involve significant changes in work processes, if not on organizational structures.

The third stage involves extending the use of ICT for eGovernance, defined as the use of ICT to enhance government accountability, consultation, and transparency as part of government's responsibility to the governed. This goes beyond enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of internal and external government structures and processes, and services, and alters power relationships between the government and the governed. It starts with how government is organized and operates and goes to the very heart of the relation-

ship between the government and the governed. A basic requirement for a democratic system is a dynamic interplay between the government and the governed. This requires a commitment on the part of the government, as well as demands a high level of organizational and behavioral agility.

With expanded electronic venues the dynamic interplay of eGovernance demands a government that is adept at internal knowledge management (KM) and embraces and embodies a culture of learning organization (LO) behavior. Figure 1 captures these relationships

For the past two decades ICT has emerged as an integral element of changing organizational structures and social processes. This has accelerated with the rapid growth of social networking applications, applications that have profound implications for eDemocracy. However, ICT absorption capacity by governments has advanced less quickly. This is particularly true for governments in developing and transition economies. Part of this lack of progress is explained by resource constraints. A significant hindrance is the lack of an understanding with respect to how to deploy ICT to facilitate improved government structures, processes and accountability. All too often the focus is on in-house efficiencies, at the expense of the effective implementation of this new infrastructure for iGovernment, eGovernment, eGovernance, and ultimately democracy.

This chapter addresses two essential elements in the formulation an eGovernance action plan, hopefully an action plan that complements the forces for democracy. Both elements are essential to iGovernment and eGovernment strategies. It focuses on the roles of Knowledge Management (KM) and Learning Organization (LO) behavior within the expanded workspaces of an ICT-enabled electronic venue. This KM/LO/ICT model was designed and tested on data obtained from a survey of 143 Slovenian public agencies, representing a 50% response rate on sample of 288 agencies.

Slovenia is a small transition economy newly admitted to the European Union. It offers an ex-

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