

Chapter 16

Moving towards the Connected Transformational Government: Perspectives from Malaysia and Beyond

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ABSTRACT

Policy makers around the world today are quickly embracing ICT as an enabler to improve government service delivery. However, in trying to achieve this, they are faced with the challenge of how to deal with silos of core systems entrenched for many years and owned by different governmental departments. Given that a rip-and-replace approach is not practical, governments have become very interested in interoperable solutions.

This chapter provides insights into interoperability from the point of view of delivering government services. It shows that today, technology and the industry have progressed to such an extent that the technical barriers to interoperability can be overcome in many ways. The real challenge is to address business interoperability that involves the interplay of technical, architectural, strategic, organizational, policy, and legal dimensions. This, in turn, has influenced the evolution of government interoperability frameworks, where some governments have incorporated Enterprise Architecture approaches. Today, new socio-economic challenges require policy makers to rethink their approaches in ways that will enable them to constantly improve and evolve citizen-centric services powered by an ICT-enabled Connected Transformational Government.

INTRODUCTION

Governments have been one of the early adopters of computing technologies in the areas of research, military, and others. From these early days, systems and applications were typically purchased and managed by individual departments and organizations. Over the years, government systems are generally purchased on a solution-by-solution basis, and driven by the need to acquire the best solution for a specific purpose. The result of this is the creation of a wide range of separate information and data islands across Government with no easy way of unlocking the valuable information assets they collectively contain to support more useful and productive processes.

The increasing use of networks of computers and the explosion in the consumption of digital media content over the last twenty years have influenced government to rethink the way they interact with their citizens leveraging on the evolving technologies. This has led to the numerous “e-Government” initiatives that were seen across the globe. Starting with basic access to static government web sites, policy makers came to realize the potential cost savings and other advantages in moving traditional face-to-face transactions to the electronic form. This resulted in the shift towards e-Government applications that not only can respond to citizen requests dynamically with the most up-to-date information, but also able to support transactions such as information updates and payments.

More recently, governments around the world have been confronted with opposing challenges. The increasing pervasiveness of high technology within society demands that government meets the expectations of an IT-savvy society. On the other hand, Governments find the growing need to deal with the ever-increasing pressures of cut-backs and cost reduction while addressing ever rising public expectations. Consequently, public administrators are forced to rethink their strategy to create a more

coherent e-Government landscape that leverages on interoperability across the organization. This typically involves the orchestration of a collection of sub-services that can span across multiple departments, which are delivered in an integrated manner using multiple channels and devices. Such successful initiatives not only simplify the way citizens and businesses interact with governments, but it can also enhance the effectiveness and productivity of the government machinery to power the national transformational agendas that many countries have. The “No Wrong Door” initiative in Malaysia is an example of an effort by a developing country.

Case Study: “No Wrong Door Initiative in Malaysia”

Malaysians today have very high expectations of the Government delivery system. They expect fast, efficient and quality service when dealing with the Government, regardless of time or place. Effective and optimum use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is the best means to boost the quality of the public service delivery system. In 2008, Malaysia’s Chief Secretary to the Government outlined the definition of being customer-focused in public service delivery. The main goal here was to institutionalize the delivery of quality public services in Malaysia. In essence, the Malaysian Public Service was gearing itself to enable its citizens to easily access public services. This program was called the “One Service, One Delivery, No Wrong Door” that reflects the Government’s aspiration to present a ‘One Government, Many Agencies’ identity when delivering services to the citizens. The program goals were to ascertain the following:

- Government agencies are viewed as an integrated entity, well coordinated, well informed, and customer friendly.

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