

Chapter 38

Applying Open Innovation Strategies to eGovernment for Better Public Services

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ABSTRACT

Globalization, increasing automation, and the growth of the Internet are setting up a services-driven world at a scale and pace never before witnessed in history whose novelty is the proactive engagement of service recipients in the process of service delivery. Such change-driving forces will inevitably drive Government enterprises to reconsider the way that they deliver public services. As it has been realized in the industry, the transition of Government enterprises to the services-driven world will call for fundamental transformation in the provision of public services in the future, and a complete new way for Governments to work and interact with their citizens. Towards this direction, the authors propose an open innovation model through a process of democratic engagement between service providers and service recipients, where citizenship is reinstated at the heart of public service delivery. A service engineering methodology to support the proposed citizen-driven participatory design of public sector services is also provided.

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INTRODUCTION

Today's environment is characterized by pervasive globalization, dynamic change, persistent flow of information and communication, and proliferation of technology. The emergence of the Internet has changed the way people communicate, work, collaborate, research, and innovate amongst others, actively contributing to the creation of a "connected world" driven by users.

This new environment has stimulated not only technological advancements and innovations in the way of doing business and collaborating, but it has also transformed the capabilities of individuals at a scale and pace never before witnessed in history. Individuals have evolved from simple spectators, to active participants and creators. This empowerment has brought about technology-mediated virtual communities of users that collectively create knowledge, products, and services, making the world a truly user-driven cosmos.

Moreover, this "perfect storm of forces" (Tapscott et al., 2008) has also changed the rules of the innovation game. The Internet and the new wave of social networking have enabled not only individuals to communicate and collaborate but also companies to interact, collaborate, and co-create with their customers and business stakeholders. Companies are "moving away of the structures of the past that are based on hierarchies, discrete groups and teams and moving towards those based on more fluid and emergent organizational forms such as networks and communities" (Hildreth and Kimble, 2004).

As such, the (innovation) activity that was traditionally characterized as a closed, linear, proprietary, intra-company, central and lengthy one, has now become an open, public, inter-company, distributed and quick activity.

The open innovation concept (Chesbrough, 2003a, 2003b) extends the boundaries of the firms, enabling business entities to harness "outside ideas to advance their own businesses while leveraging their internal ideas outside their cur-

rent operations" (p. 41). Anchored in the notion of "abundant knowledge" (Chesbrough, 2003a), this new innovation logic enables companies to create business value by opening up their innovation processes and amalgamating internal and external sources of ideas by deploying outside and in-house pathways to the market. This integration of multiple external sources is highly expected to lead to added value for organizations that will achieve greater return on innovative activities (West and Gallagher, 2004).

Existing indications on the benefits of adhering to an open innovation model are mainly focusing on a *corporate level*; placing special emphasis upon the high technology industries such as information technology, computers and pharmaceuticals, even though academics indicate that the model's applicability extends far beyond (Chesbrough and Crowther, 2006). Hence, one may wonder whether the model of open and user-driven innovation may be applied in the context of *government* as well. And if so, how could governments utilize the user-centric model of open innovation to stimulate the development and delivery of more efficient and effective public services.

Despite the vast research attention of open innovation at a corporate level, there is limited research examining open innovation strategies in the context of government (Fuglsang, 2008; Feller et al., 2010; Nam, 2010). As a result, public services are often delivered with a low level of satisfaction and trust from the citizen perspective. To close the gap between governments and citizens, a key trend in the public service reform agenda is to empower the citizens' voices in the public service design process. To achieve this, governments need to find novel ways of connecting with their citizens, and to listen and respond in ways that reassure them that they are being understood. Taken a step further, governments should effectively engage people in the public service design and delivery process. Engaging the citizen in a dialogue about how and where services should be provided, and which services are most important, are essential

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