

Chapter 27

Towards Innovating Electronic Government Projects Management, Utilising Goal-Driven, Knowledge-Based Methods and Tools

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ABSTRACT

Research shows that e-Government projects have higher failure rates than similar approaches in the private sector indicating the lack of a method to transfer knowledge and apply best management practices in an effective way. After stating the fundamental principles of project management and performing an identification of shortcomings of existing methodologies, that apply to public administration IT projects, the paper presents a conceptual model for e-Government project management that can be structured and adapted to cover all types of relevant projects in an out-of-the-box approach. Being goal oriented and supported by relevant tools, this knowledge base of predefined project components can then be populated and utilised in making more informed decisions for effective project management of e-Government initiatives. This way, the proposed method supports public officials and practitioners in learning from past experience projects and in designing and running e-Government projects in a more systematic manner, thus significantly increasing the likelihood of project success.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Successful implementation of e-Government projects can be a challenging task. All such initiatives are usually composed of a number of distinct and inter-related tasks or aspects, the successful completion of which is important to deliver on the project objectives, especially since larger societal and social repercussions are present beyond those for IT implementation in the private sector (Heeks, 2003). In view of the increased focus on prudent spending of public administration financial resources, as well as the ever-decreasing availability of public sector funding for such projects within the global financial crisis, it is more and more important that projects are properly planned, executed, controlled and completed so as to get the desired results in the expected time, with proper costs and adequate quality (Nilsson, 2008).

Literature reports the experience with e-Government initiatives as being chaotic and unwieldy (Layne & Lee, 2001). According to a study by Andersen Consulting, even the most developed countries have tapped less than 20% of their potential in this regard (Andersen & Henriksen, 2006). Publications in leading research journals display a naive optimism showed by several stakeholders, by merely regarding IT as a useful thing and neglecting the evidence of the definitional fuzziness of the e-Government concept, the oversimplification of e-Government development procedures within intricate political and institutional environments, and the various methodological restrictions that end up in the widespread failure of e-Government (Heeks & Bailur, 2007; Yildiz, 2007). Heeks (2008) in an extensive research done on projects in the public sector has shown that 35% of public sector ICT projects around the world can be categorized as total failures, 50% as partial failures, and only 15% as successful. Similarly a World Bank study (Neto et al., 2005) underpins that the majority of public sector ICT applications in developing countries are either partial or total failures. One of the main factors attributed to these failures, is poor project management (Sarantis et al., 2010). It is therefore imperative that appropriate methodologies are selected for managing this special category of projects, while at the same time the key variables that can potentially affect the performance of projects are identified and addressed. This development of project management methods specific to the e-Government domain, has to be achieved in a way that is complementary and not contradictory to existing, widely spread generic project management methodologies.

The specific challenges, the identification of shortcomings and the proposal of a new, innovative framework for managing IT projects in public administration is further analysed in the following sections: In section two, specific e-Government implementation challenges are identified and analysed. In Section three, the landscape of e-Government Project Management is analysed - resulting in specific issues that should be encountered. In section four, our proposed framework is presented and its application in a real case is presented in section five. A framework discussion follows in section six and finally conclusions and future perspectives are presented in the last section.

2. E-GOVERNMENT IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES

The models and methods applied in private sector projects have been viewed with much scepticism in the literature on public administration (Boyne, 2002). The main dissidence is summarized in Sayre's (1953) standpoint that public and private organizations are 'fundamentally alike in all unimportant respects'. Allison argues that 'the notion that there is any significant body of private management practices and skills that can be transferred directly to public management tasks in a way that produces significant

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