

Chapter I

Moving from E–Government to T–Government:

A Study of Process Reengineering Challenges in a UK Local Authority Context

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ABSTRACT

Most public services are overly complex, and separate where citizens have no choice in the service that they receive. All too often, Information and Communication Technologies are overlaid onto existing organisational structures without any consideration to how these structures can be improved. In this context, the UK government is striving towards a vision for government-wide transformation, in which local authorities and central government departments are endeavouring to work with each other to deliver better services to citizens, via a one-stop-shop environment for all services under the guise of electronic government (e-government). Having successfully e-enabled customer facing processes, the UK government is now working towards reengineering and e-enabling back office processes and information systems to facilitate more joined-up and citizen-centric e-government services. These efforts are referred to as the transformational stage of e-government or t-Government. This chapter seeks to explore what t-Government means to local authorities in the UK and what process related challenges have to be overcome to successfully implement transformational change in local government. A number of broader issues of strategic, organisational, socio-cultural, and technical origin are identified in the literature as presenting a considerable challenge for this goal. However, using a case study of a key local government service, this chapter shows that more obviously, but often ignored, process and information systems related issues pose an even more significant challenge in practice.

INTRODUCTION

Since the advent of the Internet some forty years ago (Ho, 2002), the number of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) driven services have quadrupled making today's society a technology and Internet savvy one. The Internet has enabled businesses to trade and offer services using ICT to respond to consumer needs around the clock and from any location. While the 1990s saw the internet enabled e-Commerce revolution with private and multinational organizations, in the new millennium we have witnessed public sector organizations embracing the same principles of e-business through the introduction of national Electronic Government (e-government) initiatives. Since the mid 1990s ICT has played an important role in incrementally changing and shifting traditional and bureaucratic government models into the current e-government model where services are delivered according customers' needs (Wimmer, 2004). The drivers for e-government broadly include improving internal cost and management efficiencies, encouraging citizen participation, promoting economic development and improving overall governance (Schware *et al.*, 2003; Gandhi and Cross, 2001; Lee *et al.*, 2005). All developed countries have now implemented some form of e-government (Al-Kibsi *et al.* 2001; Palanisamy, 2004; Accenture 2005) – with most having implemented transactional level services (See for instance Layne and Lee, 2001; Weerakkody *et al.*, 2007); and the majority of developing countries are beginning to follow suit (Karunanada and Weerakkody, 2006). E-government is seen as no longer an option but a necessity for all countries aiming for better and efficient governance (Gupta and Jana, 2003).

With the popularity of e-government growing, various researchers have offered different definitions to explain the concept (Seifert and Petersen, 2002; Holden *et al.*, 2003). However, these definitions differ according to the varying e-government focus and are usually centered on

technology, business, process, citizen, government or a functional perspective. For instance, Seifert and Petersen (2002) explains e-government with a functional focus; Burn and Robins (2003) defines it with a citizens focus; Zhiyuan (2002) views e-government with a technology focus; Wassenaar (2000) classifies it with a business focus; Wimmer and Traunmuller (2000) takes a more government centered view; and Bonham *et al.* (2001) defines it with a process focus. In essence therefore, e-government is about the transformation of internal and external processes of government using information and communication technologies to provide efficient and user focused services to citizens, businesses and other stakeholders (Lee and Hong, 2002; Gupta and Jana, 2003; Evans, 2003; Basu, 2004; Gandhi and Cross, 2001; Burn *et al.*, 2003; Stoltzfus, 2004).

Many researchers have proposed various stages of e-government development (Layne and Lee, 2001; Siau and Long, 2005). These stages revolve mainly around four phases, which are web presence, interaction, transaction and transformation (Baum and Di Maio, 2001; Balutis, 2001; Layne and Lee, 2001). The transformational phase of e-government implementation (or T-Government) is the highest level of maturity for e-government programmes, thus it is also the most challenging phase to reach (Layne and Lee, 2001). The transformation phase encompasses redefining the delivery of government services by providing a single point of contact to citizens' that makes the government completely transparent to citizens and businesses (Affisco and Soliman, 2006). To realise the aforementioned and to provide citizens with seamless services, e-government will therefore need business processes that can be continuously optimized and expanded outside the enterprise and outside internal enterprise systems (Fagan, 2006; Fustes, 2003a; Champy, 2002). However, many researchers such as Lee *et al.*, 2005, Holden *et al.*, (2002), Layne and Lee (2001), and Sarikas and Weerakkody, (2007) identified that most e-government initiatives often stagnate at the transaction

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