

Chapter 4

Recommended ICT Values for Public Service Delivery in the Digital Era

ABSTRACT

Chapter 4 is the final chapter in Section 1. It elaborates further on the principles discussed in the three previous chapters. It outlines a number of strategic objectives in the quest for change. The chapter discusses a suggested multi-centricity model that is based upon the five centric pillars mentioned throughout the first four chapters. This multi-centricity model prescribes a number of fundamental principles that should be considered in formulating government ICT strategies. This chapter also examines the latest technology trends to achieve IT-enabled services that are viewed as key to immediate economic development. It also examines the internet of things and communication trends that are seen as the door to the future for public service delivery and a fast way forward for future innovation. The chapter concludes by cautioning governments that failing to make the transition to the new digital environment will likely see them experience significant negative consequences.

INTRODUCTION

My focus and that of all members of the Government responsible for delivering services to the public is to make sure that the public sector can use all the skills it needs to do the job the public wants it to do.
Baroness Estelle Morris, Politician and Academic

Technology is a means to an end, not an end in itself. Technology should be viewed as a way of achieving the corporate strategic objectives of a government. Hence, public service delivery in the digital era is not about allocating large sums of money at the annual government budget in state-of-the-art-technology for technology's sake. The ultimate aim is to spend wisely and take the advantages and opportunities that technology has to offer and using this critical and extraordinary tool to make life much easier for citizens, civil society and businesses through the implementation of public sector administrative reforms. Hence,

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the challenge for governments is not to permit technology driven solutions but to implement corporate driven digital solutions that allow public administrators to provide effective public service delivery to their many dissimilar clients.

Digital solutions need to be incorporated within public sector capacities, operational methodologies, legal and administrative frameworks, work and information flows, and business processes. Collectively these form the basis for an intelligent and effective digital environment. It is this new digital environment that provides a ground-breaking means of how governments conduct their business and how they relate and build long term relationships with their customers.

Governments that fail to make the transition to this envisaged new digital environment will likely experience significant negative consequences, including hostile privacy and security violations; poor budgetary performance; inadequate service delivery; and ultimately loss or failure to gain people's trust. Governments through their public service administration should aim to create an all inclusive centric information society where everyone can initiate, make use of and share information and knowledge within acceptable legal and ethical principles, thus helping individuals, communities and businesses to reach their full potential to improve their quality of life and contribute to the sustainable economic development of their country.

BACKGROUND

The previous chapters have focused on the analysis of the ICT strategies of a number of major geographic regions and key influential International Institutions, such as OECD and the World Bank. The analysis of these ICT strategies provided a general depiction of how public service delivery in the digital era is influenced by technological change and the achievements that are being made by governments across the globe. However, public service delivery in the digital era is not about hurling technology at public administrations. The challenge is to incorporate the utility of digital technology into the public sector administrative reform process. All too often, governments permit technology driven solutions that are costly and habitually ineffective, instead of focusing on corporate business driven digital solutions that allow public administrators to provide effective public service delivery to their diverse spectrum of clients.

There is a need for digital technology to be integrated within public sector capacities, operational methodologies, legal and administrative frameworks, work and information flows, and business processes to form the basis for an intelligent and effective digital environment. This new digital environment requires an innovative way of how governments conduct their business and how they relate and link to their customers. Governments need to restructure themselves and be outward looking rather than merely focusing on internal issues. People and business entities are using digital technology extensively for seeking information, purchasing custom made products and services, making electronic payments and a whole host of other electronic services and activities. People and business entities expect the same digital services from governments that they normally receive from the private sector. Hence, user expectations when dealing with their governments are constantly changing and increasing. Therefore, successful digital government strategies should reflect the expectations of the public and business sectors alike, in terms of economic and social worth, transparency and honesty, innovation, personalised service delivery and open exchange of ideas with citizens and businesses in the formulation of government policies.

The vision for enhancing public service delivery in the digital era is to be based on the enhancement of the information society, where the creation, deployment, dissemination, integration and processing

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