

Chapter 1.22

Introducing Mobile Government

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ABSTRACT

This chapter introduces the mobile government concept and creates a context for discussing various applications, services, and the relevant technologies. The context presented also includes the introduction of ideas on the characteristics of mobile government and some major issues that justify the necessity of the mobile government and identify the potential that it possesses. This chapter should serve as a foundation for the discussions on the further chapters.

INTRODUCTION

E-government efforts aim to benefit from the use of most innovative forms of information communication technologies, particularly Web-based Internet applications, in improving governments'

fundamental functions. These functions are now using mobile and wireless technologies and creating a direction for e-government: mobile government. Mobile government (m-government) may be defined as a *strategy and its implementation involving the utilization of all kinds of wireless and mobile technology, services, applications, and devices for improving benefits to the parties involved in e-government including citizens, businesses, and all government units* (Kushchu & Kuscu, 2003).

Despite its early stage, m-government seems to have a substantial influence on the generation of set of complex strategies and tools for e-government efforts and on their roles and functions. M-government is inevitable. The number of people having access to mobile phones and mobile Internet connection is increasing rapidly. The mobile access—anywhere any time—is becoming a natural part of daily life, and the governments

will have to transform their activities according to this demand of convenience and efficiency of interactions for all parties.

The coming age of m-government raises several interesting questions. Will m-government replace the e-government activities? Despite its significance, m-government cannot be seen as replacing e-government, and in many cases it will be complementary to e-government efforts. The conventional e-government efforts provide services through wired network with interactive and relatively intelligent Web applications. The value of m-government comes from the capabilities of applications supporting mobility of the citizens, businesses, and internal operations of the governments. For example, supporting law enforcement agents who are on patrol is a distinctive advantage of mobile government services over conventional e-government implementations. Wireless applications may enable greater mobilization of the government officials with the ability to handle real-time information concerning, for example, crimes, accidents, safety, and other public issues.

This chapter provides an introduction to m-government. In the following section, a number of m-government applications from various countries are briefly presented in order to familiarize the readers with what is actually involved in m-government. Next, the distinctive characteristics that differentiate m-government from e-government are stated. Finally, a discussion of current issues in m-government is presented.

SOME MOBILE GOVERNMENT APPLICATIONS AND SERVICES

The technology and the services landscape is slowly taking its place in various m-government implementations. Some of the early adopters of m-government services include law enforcements, fire fighting (Easton, 2002), emergency medical

services, education, health, and transportation (Yu & Kushchu, 2004). The following tables provide examples from each group of applications on where the application is developed, and a brief description of each.

Instant Information Release

Mobile devices are often carried by users and are always turned on. This characteristic enables mobile devices to serve as a warning or reminder to users with quick and specific information release (Table 1).

Quick Information Collection

The possibility of retrieving information while on the move is one of the major characteristics of mobile government applications. This allows civil servants to collect necessary information to provide more efficient and effective service to the public. Examples are shown in Table 2.

Mobile Transactions

Transactions are essential parts of doing business. Currently, many companies are exploring the possibility of mobile commerce and some governmental organizations have already taken the initiative to utilize this opportunity (Table 3).

Faster Information Exchange

In case the speed of information exchange is important but not critical, applications are defined as enhancing the pleasure value for users (Table 4).

Fighting Against Crime

To fight against crime, law enforcements need citizens' corporation to provide information. The reports from citizens can increase the chance for police

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