Chapter VIII

E-Government Evolution in Ireland: A Framework for Successful Implementation

William Golden, National University of Ireland, Galway, Ireland
Martin Hughes, National University of Ireland, Galway, Ireland
Murray Scott, National University of Ireland, Galway, Ireland

Abstract

E-government provides unparalleled opportunities for governments to streamline processes and improve customer service. As a result, achieving successful citizen-centred e-government has become a key concern for many governments. This chapter analyses the Irish government’s evolutionary path to the provision of successful e-government. The success factors and stages of evolution of e-government are identified and a detailed examination of how the Irish government successfully implemented its e-government strategy is presented. The lessons learned from this case provide a valuable road map for the successful attainment of citizen-centred e-government in other jurisdictions.

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Introduction

Information technology has had a long association with business, first as a provider of unprecedented efficiencies and second as an element of business strategy in its own right (Porter, 2001; Venkatraman, 1994). Through the use of electronic commerce technologies, public- and private-sector companies are challenged to redesign their processes in order to achieve the benefits of increased efficiencies, cost reductions, and better customer service (Glassey, 2001; Warkentin, Gefen, Pavlou, & Rose, 2002).

The Internet is an important new technology as it provides better opportunities for companies to establish distinctive strategic positions than those offered by previous generations of information technology (Porter, 2001). It can provide opportunities for strategic advantage, cost savings, and new revenue streams (Mahadevan, 2000). Consequently, Internet technologies bring challenges for public- and private-sector companies (Earl & Bushra, 2001).

Electronic commerce can be defined as the use of the Internet to conduct commercial transactions (Mahadevan, 2000). Electronic commerce is generally conducted in three broad structures: portals, market makers, and product or service providers (Bakos, 1991; Mahadevan). The benefits of these structures to the supplier include lower costs and access to wider markets, while the advantages to the buyer are lower transaction costs, access to greater amounts of information, and convenience of purchase (Porter, 2001).

Today, governments are using the Internet to provide public services to their citizens (Gouscos, Georgiadis, Martakos, & Stamoulis, 2001; Watson & Mundy, 2001). In so doing, governments aim to form better relationships with businesses and citizens by providing more efficient and effective services (Al-Kibisi, de Boer, Moursied, & Rea, 2001; Eyob, 2004; Layne & Lee, 2001; Warkentin et al., 2002). Governments can also use e-commerce to improve core business processes (Coulthard & Castleman, 2001; Gronlund, 2002; Lloyd, 2002).

This chapter investigates the evolution of e-government in Ireland up to the summer of 2002. A review of the literature is presented that details the recognised success factors in e-government, the stages of e-government evolution, and international e-government comparisons. A case study is presented detailing how the Irish government’s e-government strategy was devised and implemented. The success of this implementation yields valuable insights into the identification and management of critical concerns during the evolvement and attainment of e-government. Cumulatively, these lessons provide a road map for the successful attainment of citizen-centred e-government. Specifically, the case details how an excess of 50 government authorities, both local and central, were brought together in order to provide a single point of access to government services.