

Chapter 7

Developing an Internet and Intranet Usage Policy for a Metropolitan Municipality in South Africa

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ABSTRACT

This chapter deals with a suggested framework for developing an Internet and Intranet usage policy for municipalities in South Africa. Since the Internet and Intranet are widely used in municipalities in South Africa, there is a need to define the associated risks, the conditions under which a municipality's Internet and Intranet services may be used and the sanctions which may be imposed for non compliance by employees. The chapter discussion includes suggested associated Internet and Intranet usage procedures; implementation and institutional arrangements; and monitoring, evaluation and responsibilities. Some future trends for an Internet and Intranet usage policy are also suggested.

INTRODUCTION

An Internet and Intranet usage policy for an organisation should be positioned within an organisation's information security management infrastructure. While some literature exists for Internet security policies in organisations (see, for example, Holbrook & Reynolds, 1991; Pethia, Crocker & Fraser, 1991; Lichtenstein, 1997), from a scan of the available literature, not much research has been undertaken into developing an Internet and Intranet usage policy for municipalities in

South Africa. Lichtenstein & Swatman (1997) indicate that research into Internet (and Intranet) acceptable usage policies is scarce. A policy paper may be seen as a comprehensive framework of interaction. The introduction to a policy paper establishes and defines the main content of what will follow in the body of the paper (Young & Quinn, 2002).

The chapter begins by giving the reader an introduction to the terms *Internet* and *Intranet* and the rationale for developing an Internet and Intranet usage policy for metropolitan municipalities in South Africa. In the background section, the origins of the term 'policy' are then discussed. The

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main section of the chapter deals with a suggested framework for developing (and an example of) an Internet and Intranet usage policy for municipalities in South Africa. The discussion includes the associated Internet and Intranet usage procedures; implementation and institutional arrangements; and monitoring, evaluation and responsibilities. Some future trends for an Internet and Intranet usage policy are then suggested. Finally a conclusion is presented. Developing a suggested Internet and Intranet usage policy instrument for metropolitan municipalities in South Africa is the objective of this chapter.

INTERNET AND INTRANET

The Internet is a worldwide communication network linking thousands of computer networks and many millions of users through public and private telecommunication lines. The Internet is “a network of networks” (Turban, Rainer & Potter, p. 50). The Intranet is the use of Web technologies to create a private network, usually within an organisation (Turban, Rainer & Potter).

Metropolitan municipalities have an Internet website, for example, to communicate with the public about the activities of the municipality and to promote business and investment information within the city. Without an Internet website, tender information and a range of information about a municipality’s departments, activities and campaigns will not be available. Metropolitan municipalities have an Intranet website, for example, to communicate with its employees, as a common area from which to access documents and resources, and to provide a platform for various online tools. Without an Intranet website, paper consumption will not be reduced by providing material in electronic format and there will be no platform from which employees can access interactive services (e.g. a Human Resources self-service portal). Therefore, the conditions under which these Internet and

Intranet websites may be used should be set out in an Internet and Intranet usage policy.

Metropolitan municipalities in South Africa provide access to the information resources and facilities of the Internet and Intranet to help their employees undertake their jobs more effectively and efficiently. Doddrell (1995) suggests that it is every computer user’s responsibility to protect information “because it may also be their job” (p. 4). The facilities to provide that access represent a considerable commitment of a municipality’s resources in respect of desktops, telecommunications, security, software, software licenses and user support often at significant cost. They also represent a significant risk if they are not used or managed correctly. Internet and Intranet risks deserve an Internet and Intranet specific policy for effective control. As Lichtenstein & Swatman (1997) indicate, an assessment of Internet (and Intranet) risks will enable an Internet and Intranet “acceptable usage policy to be developed which controls the risks and hence limits the losses incurred” (p. 184). Internet and Intranet risks should therefore be taken very seriously by municipalities.

Since the Internet and Intranet (which use similar technologies and pose similar risks) are widely used in municipalities in South Africa, there is a need to define a clear and straightforward manner (such as in an Internet and Intranet usage policy) what those risks are, the conditions under which a municipality’s Internet and Intranet services may be used and the sanctions which may be imposed for non compliance by employees. Furthermore, from a good governance perspective in municipalities, there is a need to effectively communicate policies to its stakeholders. In such cases the Intranet will play an enabling role. There is therefore a need to develop guidelines for Internet and Intranet usage in municipalities. An effective organisational Internet (and Intranet) strategy must cater for diverse problems which may arise as a result of Internet and Intranet connection Lichtenstein & Swatman (1997).

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