Chapter 2
An E–Government Strategic Planning Framework

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ABSTRACT

Public sector organizations have started to use e-government initiatives in order to realize their business values. Although it is well known that the alignment between business and IT improves performance, it has not been studied in public sector organizations. Since a majority of the business-IT alignment models rely on economical jurisdictions, they cannot be blindly implemented in public sector organizations that have business as well as political values. In this chapter, the authors propose an e-government planning framework that is based on the business-IT alignment in a public sector organization.

INTRODUCTION

Electronic government (e-government) planning has become an important research topic during the past few years. Various models and frameworks have been developed for planning e-government. Public sector organizations have spent millions of dollars in planning e-government. However, their continuing failure in realizing their political and organizational objectives clearly indicates a lack of managerial insight in planning. A majority of

research has focused on planning IT infrastructure for electronic service (e-service) delivery. Few studies have identified political participation and issues of management as important contributors to the success of e-government (*c.f.* Moon, 2002).

Business value of information technologies (IT) has been getting tremendous attention in the academic literature. Benefits of implementing information technology (IT) include cost reduction, quality improvement, and revenue growth (Oh and Pinsonneault, 2007). The information systems (IS) literature suggests that these are strategic benefits and can only be appropriated by the alignment of

business and IT (Henderson and Venkatraman, 1993; Herschheim and Sabharwal, 2001; Luftman and Brier, 1999). Following this idea, academics have developed various e-government models/ frameworks that try to explore e-government adoption, success metrics, and governance structure. Furthermore, the new public management (NPM) literature focuses on the issues related to reinvention of government (Davison, Wagner, and Ma, 2005). However, e-government researchers have failed to recognize the potential of strategic alignment between business and IT and ignored it in their research.

In this paper, we present an e-government planning framework. The objective of this research paper is to explore the business strategy of e-government initiatives. We propose that an e-government initiative will only be successful if there is strategic alignment between business the business strategy and IT strategy of the public sector organization. The paper has been organized as follows. The next section discusses the strategic alignment of IT. The following section describes the research methodology. Various e-government models are presented and reviewed in the next section. The subsequent section presents the proposed framework. Finally, the conclusion and avenues for future research are presented.

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT OF IT

The strategic alignment IT has received tremendous attention in the IS literature. It has been defined as the alignment between the goals and objectives of a firm's business strategy and the goals and objectives of its IT strategy (Henderson and Venkatraman, 1996; Chan, 2002). It includes the vision for the role of IT in the firm, major decisions and actions regarding IT, and IT development strategy (Oh and Pinsonneault, 2007).

In their seminal article on strategic alignment of IT, Henderson and Venkatraman (1993) posit that

in an organization the technology domain differs from the business domain. Their classic strategic alignment model suggests that the strategic fit (between strategies and internal infrastructures and processes) and functional integration (between the business and the technology domain) are two dimensions of strategic IT alignment. Chan et al. (1997) extend Henderson and Venkatraman's model by proposing that alignment between realized IS strategy and realized business strategy leads to performance improvement. While the strategic orientation of IS in the Henderson and Venkatraman model is conceptualized as strategy that is documented, it does not necessarily lead to IS effectiveness and performance improvement. It is because documented strategy is intended strategy but it may or may not be realized. However, we have adopted Luftman and Brier's (1999) process model of strategic IT alignment as it mirrors traditional strategic planning. The model comprises of six steps that are: 1) set the goals and establish a team, 2) understand the business-IT linkage, 3) analyze and prioritize gaps, 4) specify the actions (project management), 5) choose and evaluate success criteria, and 6) sustain alignment.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study uses the meta-synthesis approach for creating the e-government portal planning framework. In this approach, metaphors of different qualitative studies are compared and integrated to produce a theory (Beck, 2002). This method has been widely used in the social sciences and medical area (Shahkookh and Abdollahi, 2007).

We have adopted the Noblit and Hare (1998) approach, which proposes seven steps. The steps are as follows:

1. Getting started: the aim of this study is to develop an e-government planning framework based on the project management approach

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