

Chapter 27

Project Management: An e-Government Driver?

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this chapter is to present the e-Government's problems attributed to project management and to introduce research to determine if these problems could be mitigated by strengthening the North American project management standard methodology (PMBOK - Project Management Body of Knowledge 2000 Edition) to support an e-Government environment. Specifically, this chapter intends to share insights into answering the following questions: Why has e-Government, especially transformational e-Government, not advanced around the world to the degree anticipated? Neither developed nor emerging nations have embraced the opportunities to the extent possible, and few can share and breach the gap towards success. Could current project management methodologies have played a role? Were they helpful? Did they drive or hinder success?

INTRODUCTION

Over the last ten years, e-Government has grown and proliferated around the world primarily in response to demands for citizen-based services and the transformation of public sector services. This new focus requires the delivery of large horizontally based information technology systems that

cross organizational and jurisdictional lines that according to the Standish Group Chaos Reports 2003, a success rate of less than 30% with the common causes of failure falling with the project management domain. A survey of e-Government projects in developing and transition economies revealed that as many as 85% are a partial (unattained goals) or total (abandoned implementation) failure (Heeks, 2003). The inability of government organizations to successfully complete public

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information technology projects threatens to undermine efforts to implement e-Government (Sarantis, Charalabidis & Askounis, 2011). And as the Organisation of Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD, 2001) states ‘Unless governments learn to manage the risks connected with large public IT projects, these e-dreams will turn into global nightmares. Governments must get the fundamentals of IT right if they want to harvest the huge potential of going online.’

Current project management methods are primarily focused on reporting progress and success of a project against prepared plans. They provide the capacity to conduct a comparison as to the state of the production of deliverables and activities according to a set of usual business practices and according to the previously prepared plan. However, such practices are often found ineffective in today’s constant and unpredictable dynamism necessitated by working with numerous agencies and across organizational lines, as well as changes in the political, socio and economical environment.

This chapter summarizes the e-Government’s problems attributed to project management and describes the research in progress to determine how they could be mitigated by strengthening the PMBOK project management approach through enhancements to the project initiation phase and a technology enabled support function for e-Government project management practices. The structure of this chapter begins with a background and problem definition namely the inability of PMBOK to serve e-Government needs, and then offers an analysis of how PMBOK addresses the critical e-Government challenges. The chapter concludes with a statement outlining the need for future research to strengthen PMBOK to more effectively address the e-Government requirements.

BACKGROUND

E-Government has not been the success hoped for around the world (BCS Thought Leadership,

2005; Roy, 2006). It has been harder, slower and more complicated to deliver than what was originally expected, specifically from a business transformational agenda. Though, it promised hope for government transformation and public sector renewal and revitalization of the role of bureaucracies in the 21st century, e-Government delivered only on the transactional success of using the Internet to allow citizens closer and more direct access to government programs; important and valuable, but not fulfilling. Even in Canada, where e-Government was rated by Accenture number one in the world for 5 years in a row (Accenture, 2005, 2006, 2007), it is seen as being primarily a transactional success as opposed to a transformational one (Roy, 2006).

It may be helpful to provide some first hand information about the Government of Canada’s success as this author was part of the team that designed and implemented Canada’s Government On-Line (GOL) strategy.

In October 1999, the Government of Canada launched the Government On-Line (GOL) initiative by announcing in the Speech from the Throne, the government’s annual priority-setting address, that ‘by 2004, our goal is to be known around the world as the government most connected to its citizens, with Canadians able to access all government information and services on-line at the time and place of their choosing’ (Government of Canada, Speech from the Throne, 1999). This formed the basis of the initiative and allowed the government to undertake a major operational and strategic approach that resulted in Canada’s e-Government success. The elements that determined this success included on line services to citizens and business as well as the integration and improvement of services that were accessible and responsive to Canadians. Its focus was not only on improved service and seamless delivery but also a justifiable difference and return on investment. It strived for a better government image with greater citizen trust, to be a better place to work, and for public sector reform.

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