Chapter 50
Organizational Change Contributions to E-Government Project Transitions

Marilu Goodyear
The University of Kansas, USA

ABSTRACT

Leaders recognize that successful transitions to e-government projects are important factors in organizational effectiveness. And yet for many public organizations, such initiatives have produced cost overruns and schedule delays, and some have ended in failure. Practitioners and researchers alike have recognized that technology transitions are not just about the technology and have placed increased emphasis on planning and organizational factors as keys to success. Utilizing contributions from the disciplines of business administration, public administration, psychology, and communication studies, this chapter explores the planning, process, and people aspects of technology transitions in an integrated way. Organizational change theories are directly related to traditional concepts of project management; process views of organizational change are related to planning views of project management. A framework focused on the people aspect of technology transitions provides insights for researchers and practitioners on addressing resistance to change through the use of specific communication protocols. In addition, the framework addresses the development of successful follower profiles within technology transitions. Additional research is sought to validate this framework.

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INTRODUCTION

E-Government and Organizational Change

E-government utilizes information and communication technologies, especially Internet and web-based technologies, to provide government services online to citizens, businesses, and other government agencies so as to bring about economic benefits (Andersen & Henriksen, 2006; Layne & Lee, 2001). E-government is about having a centralized, yet distributed operation to shrink communications and information cost (Jaeger & Thompson, 2003) and to maximize effectiveness, efficiency (Landsbergen & Wolken, 2001) speed, productivity and service delivery (Garson, 2004; Wimmer, 2002). E-government projects have the potential to absorb a significant amount of public funds and the success depends, in general, on the extent to which these projects are delivered timely, within budget and according to specifications.

The adoption of information technology (IT) entails high levels of risk and understanding the process of e-government implementation is still limited, largely remaining in a 'black box' (Yildiz, 2007). For many public organizations, IT initiatives have produced cost overruns and schedule delays and, by and large, have not lived up to managerial expectations for improvements in productivity, performance, or decision-making (Standish Group, 2004). 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). Though the exact number of failed projects is not certain and depends to some extent on how success is measured, the successful projects are in the minority (Heeks, 2004; Corner & Hinton, 2004; Standish Group, 2004). The inability of government organizations to successfully complete public information technology projects threatens to undermine efforts to implement e-government (Sarantis Charalabidis, & Askounis, 2011). Implementing e-government projects therefore requires careful planning in dealing with several challenges, from the managerial, organizational and societal to the technological, legal and regulatory (Jaeger, 2002).

Successful e-government projects become possible only when managers in government agencies realize and deal with these challenges in an effective manner (Tsai, Choi & Perry, 2008), especially adoption of strategies to overcome the organizational and managerial challenges. Emphasizing institutional constraints, Fountain's (2001) technology enactment framework shows that "the embeddedness of government actors in cognitive, cultural, social, and institutional structures influences the design, perceptions, and uses of the Internet and related [information technology]" (p. 88). By introducing three well-chosen and carefully honed case studies, she demonstrated that e-government efforts will not live up to their expectations if organizational and social institutions remain the same.

Organizational and managerial challenges range from the project's size and diversity, to the lack of alignment between organizational goals and the multiple or conflicting goals for e-government initiatives (Dawes & Pardo, 2002), to organizational resistance (Jang & Klein, 2000; Edmiston, 2003). These challenges may be addressed with user involvement, providing appropriate financial and human resources (Barret & Green, 2001), and implementation of good strategic techniques (Dawes & Nelson, 1995).

Successfully dealing with the organizational and managerial challenges to improve implementation of e-government projects also requires broader organizational change. By their nature, information technologies can spearhead reforms in ways that governments conduct business and deal with citizens through e-government applications. At the same time, reforms in public administration are needed to put in place the administrative policy and regulatory foundations to make e-government possible. As argued by Culbertson (2002), these

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