

Chapter 9

E–Government in Singapore: Critical Success Factors

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ABSTRACT

In Singapore, e-Government has been developed more than 10 years ago, concurrently with the re-invention of the Public Administration. Technologically, e-Government initiatives in Singapore have been supported by the launch of seven national strategic ICT plans since 1980. The success of Singapore's e-Government has been internationally recognised.

This chapter aims to (i) discuss the current e-Government framework in Singapore, (ii) examine factors affecting the success of e-Government in Singapore, and (iii) make policy recommendations on how to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of e-Government.

This chapter is significant as it will provide better insights for further research in e-Government, given the high demand for good governance and better delivery of public services. The lessons drawn from Singapore's e-Government, in terms of how to achieve a balance between technology adoption, citizen engagement and effective public administration, can be further developed into an e-Government model applicable to other neighbouring countries.

INTRODUCTION

E-Government has been adopted by many countries to improve public services and improve the relationship between government and other groups of stakeholders (OGS), including citizens, businesses, civil servants, and various national and international government agencies. The USA, the UK, Canada and Australia have been pioneers in adopting an electronic platform and ICT ap-

plications in the 1990s to improve the flows of information and knowledge exchange within and among government agencies, as well as between government and OGS. E-Government is one of the tools to enhance democracy as it facilitates open and two-way communication between government and citizens, and allows collective participation (Chadwick & May, 2003). According to McDaniel (2003), Yong (2003), Tapscott (2009), and Alghamdi, Goodwin, and Rampersad

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-4666-4173-0.ch009

(2011), e-Government facilitates government's efficiency, effectiveness and progress. ICT applications help government improve managerial and administrative capability, integrate inter-governmental processes (for example, tax filing reporting, payment), enhance law implementation and enforcement. E-Government can reduce the time lag, and distance is not an issue to recipients of e-services who reside in different geographical locations. Chadwick and May (2003) argued that power inequalities have existed within government, and between government and other stakeholders. The adoption of ICT new technologies, in fact, has fostered this type of pre-existing power inequity due to digital divide (McNamara, 2003). Nevertheless, the benefits of e-Government are universally undeniable.

Singapore is selected for this project due to the following reasons. Singapore is a very small city-state in Southeast Asia. However, effective management of physical and social resources has been considered one of the critical success factors of national survival. The success of Singapore has not only been demonstrated via economic achievements, but also via several achievements in e-Government. In Singapore, e-Government has been launched many years ago. Singapore's e-Government aims to reinvent government and public administration via better delivery of public services and closer interaction between government and OGS. The Singapore government has launched seven national Infocomm plans since 1980 to support the development and implementation of e-Government. Singapore has been recognised for its success in e-Government, and it has received many awards and has been ranked in the top places for its e-Government by many international organizations, such as the UNDP, the World Economic Forum, etc. Therefore, the lessons learnt from Singapore's successful e-Government may benefit other city-states which have similar socio-economic conditions and legal frameworks to the ones in Singapore.

This chapter aims to (i) discuss the current e-Government framework in Singapore, (ii) examine

factors affecting the success of e-Government in Singapore, and (iii) make policy recommendations on how to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of Singapore's e-Government which, in turn, can enhance the delivery of public services.

This study has adopted secondary research. The secondary data for this study have been obtained from academic and non-academic (government websites, annual reports, etc.) literature. As this is an explorative research project, content analysis approach has been employed to examine, analyse and evaluate the current e-Government activities and programs implemented in Singapore and critical success factors of e-Government.

This chapter is significant since it will provide better insights for further research in e-Government and governance given the high demand for good governance and better public services. The lessons drawn from Singapore's successful e-Government, in terms of how to achieve a balance between technology adoption, citizen engagement and effective public service, can be further developed into an e-Government model applicable to other neighbouring countries.

BACKGROUND

Concepts of E-Government

E-Government refers to the delivery of public services to citizens via information technology (IT), such as the Internet (Shailendra, Palvia, & Sharma, 2007; World Bank, 2011). E-Government has been considered as one of the effective instruments to improve the delivery of public services, enhance transparency and accountability, prevent corruption, engage citizens and improve interactions with businesses, citizens and among government agencies (Heeks, 2005; Evans & Ye, 2006; Rotchanakitumnuai, 2008; Angelopoulos, Kitsios, & Papadopoulos, 2010; Latre et al., 2010). Therefore, e-Government can change the nature of the relationship between government and other groups of stakeholders in the private sector and

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