

Chapter 4

Governance of Liquid Communications in the Botswana Public Sector: Neither Restricted by Time nor Space

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ABSTRACT

Botswana government uses ICT to deliver services and communicate with the public to increase access and usage of services. One of the platforms for such communications is social media which generates liquid communication. Liquid communication is defined as a type of communication that can easily go back and forth between participants involved which is neither restricted by time nor space. This can be shared and re-tweeted many times beyond the control of the creating agency, resulting in challenges regarding its management. The question that arises is, How do government agencies ensure governance of such records? Using literature review, this chapter explores governance of liquid communications by Botswana government. The study established that there are no guidelines for managing liquid communications. The chapter recommends that Botswana government should design a governance framework to guide ministries in the management of liquid communication. Failure to regulate this environment would result in trouble for the country such as loss of memory.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-5840-8.ch004

INTRODUCTION

The increasing use of information and communication technologies (ICTs), especially the internet, in government operations around the African continent as driven by public sector reform, has given impetus to the generation of electronic records (e-records) (Wamukoya & Mutula 2005). Just like their paper counterparts, e-records support the day-to-day operations of government services and interactions with citizens, private and public-sector partners. The availability of ICTs and their inherent advantages in communication has now accelerated the use of social media by organisations to create and disseminate information, making it easier to reach a wider spectrum of users. Different scholars have defined social media in different ways. It has been defined by Gartner (2016) as an online environment in which content is created, consumed, promoted, distributed, discovered or shared for purposes primarily related to communities and social activities, rather than functional, task-oriented objectives. The United States (US) Navy (2012) describes social media as a variety of communication media and platforms, including social networks, blogs, mobile applications and others. According to Boyd and Ellison (2007) this social networking service is an online service, platform or website that focuses on building and reflecting social networks among people who share interests and activities. As observed by Begum (2015), social media has become an integral part of people's lives. For example, in the United States of America, the National Archives and Records Administration (2013) reported that 70% of agencies used social media. In agreement with this assertion, Latham (2014) observed that studies of government use of social media showed that using social media as a communication tool can enable governments to reach new audiences, establish communities of practice, provide services and deliver important and effective messages to the community. The United States' Department of Energy (2010) consequently advises that if one tweets, blogs, or uses other social media to conduct official business, the resultant records should be managed in accordance with records management principles.

Interaction with citizens and the public through social media creates what is called liquid communication. This kind of communication continuously changes as and when shared as in the case with Facebook and re-tweeted in Twitter. Duranti (2014) describes liquid communication as an ongoing communication and movement of material from one circle of people to another, crossing the public-private lines through social media. For example, with Facebook, users post or share information to recipients in the network and interaction takes place as recipients make comments where the one who initially posted can respond and the communication goes on and on continually. The same post can be edited and shared several times, resulting in liquid communication. The concept of liquidity, according to Choi, Im and Yo (2013:3) was introduced around 2000 by Bauman to explain how our society

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