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Chapter V

E-Government and Organizational Change

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ABSTRACT

At varying paces, governments are aggressively pursuing e-government strategies with the expressed objective of capturing the efficiency that ICTs can provide. However, more often than not these strategies are being implemented within the existing organizational structures and practices of governments, which can, by their nature, thwart rather than advance the objectives. This chapter examines some key aspects of organizational change required by governments to make their e-government strategies successful. The change imperative entails a hard look at many of the structures, processes, cultural issues and management practices prevailing within the public sector. This chapter identifies government success factors for several organizational entities involved in e-government and assesses the implications for organizational change on government structures, work practices and culture.

Why is Organizational Change Necessary for Successful E-Government?

ICTs, by their nature, can advance reforms in the ways that governments conduct their business and relate to their citizens and clients through e-government applications. In this capacity, ICTs can serve as very useful tools for governments wishing to reform and modernize public administrations. At the same time, reforms in public administration are required to lay the administrative, policy and regulatory foundations in place to make e-government possible. Both forces working together can play a powerful role in

changing the administration of government services and operations while simultaneously advancing economic development and the e-capabilities of citizenry in the information age.

This chapter summarizes some of the principal benefits that governments should expect to achieve in the implementation of ICTs in their operations. The structure and culture of government administrations pose challenging barriers, which must be overcome in order to achieve the successful implementation of e-government across the enterprise. The most prominent systemic barriers relate to the opposing forces of the "horizontal" and "borderless" orientation of ICTs within "vertical, silo-based" structures of government.

What Does the Process of Organizational Change Entail?

Successful e-government entails overcoming these barriers through changes in the organization and practices of governments. This chapter examines changes that are required in government to support the successful implementation of ICTs and e-government strategies, including:

- The alignment of e-government to public administration reform initiatives. The chances of transforming government to drive the e-government agenda are enhanced where e-government is envisaged as part of a broader, comprehensive public administration reform initiative.
- The position and power of Cabinet-level responsibilities and organizations. The more highly situated the "e-Minister" the better. However, it is vitally important that the e-Minister is seen as owning the e-government strategy along with owning, or at least able to heavily influence, the policy and funding tools to make it happen;
- The role of senior management interdepartmental coordinating organizations.
- The role of chief information officer or an equivalent position. These positions should be less "cheerleader" and more "commander" in the e-government campaign.
- The organization of the external relationship with citizens, clients and supplier/partners in e-government — including focus groups and citizen/client feedback.

What are the Implications for Organizational Change on Government Structures and Public Administration?

Drawing from the analysis of organizational success factors and barriers to change, this chapter examines the implications for governments in addressing some of the changes in organization, administrative practice and business culture involved in effective e-government. Several of these implications are examined, including:

- Adapting to the horizontal orientation of ICTs. Fundamental to the redesign of government organization is the ability to construct, coordinate and deliver e-government across the silos of government and to ensure that the budget, management and regulatory processes of government are aligned to support, rather than thwart, this orientation.