



Developing Successful Strategies for ICT Initiatives in the Public Sector: The Case of Electronic Government Strategies in a U.S. City

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the factors that determine how government agencies develop unique strategies for information and communications technology (ICT) implementation. In addition, the paper will examine the relationship between this unique approach to ICT strategy management and its impact on electronic government initiatives within the agency. We use an adaptation of the technology enactment framework to relate the variables as both a predictive tool and to analyze the findings from a case study of a city (anonymised) in the U.S. state of Connecticut.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PAPER

A recent survey done by the United Nations (UNDPEPA, 2002) showed that 169 out of 190 national governments surveyed, including the US government, utilize the Internet in some capacity to improve the delivery of information and services to the public through a variety of electronic government initiatives (Larsen and Rainie, 2002). This unparalleled level of activity has caused public agencies to look to lessons and best-practices from the private sector (BAH, 2002). It has been shown that public agencies need to perform better the planning and strategic decision-making that is routinely found in private companies (Kaplan and Norton, 2001). The challenge for these managers is to navigate their organizations through the uncertainty of electronic government initiatives to successful outcomes (NECCC, 2000).

Research shows that policy-making frameworks should begin with the strategic planning of ICT (Vriens and Achterbergh, 2004). Although theoretical propositions have been made, several authors including Holden and Fletcher (2001) and Kaylor *et al.* (2001) have put forward that methods for supporting the strategic stage of ICT planning tailored to local governmental organizations do not yet seem to exist. One proposed method to determine the nature of factors and their impact on ICT implementation is the Technology Enactment Framework (Fountain, 2001). This framework can provide policy-makers with a tool for the analysis and prediction of determinants of successful ICT utilization. We therefore adapt this framework and examine its utility as a diagnostic tool in assessing the underlying factors of successful electronic government.

OUTLINE OF THE PAPER

The research of this thesis is explanatory in nature. It explores the operational links among several variables which include factors such as organizational form, objective and enacted technology, ICT strategy management and electronic government. A case study is conducted on the local municipal government of a city in Connecticut, USA. The case study comprises of information gathered from interviews, web site content analysis and public feedback documentation. Results from the case study analysis are compared to the prediction from the technology enactment framework. The framework also provides a series of propositions by which the findings of the case study can be analyzed. The paper also tests and critiques the applicability of the framework to a local municipal government setting.

For the sake of simplicity this paper will examine the development of electronic government strategy in U.S. context. Although limited in scope when compared with activity at the international level, it is hoped that many of the lessons can be universally applied.

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