

Chapter 37

Making Room for E-Government through Succession Planning

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ABSTRACT

Few innovations have more impact on government's work culture and the delivery of public services than e-government. E-government is a global phenomenon that is much researched, but researchers often neglect to research the demands it places on the human resources, the administrative infrastructure, and training and development. There is very little written on e-government and why it matters in succession planning. Those who design and implement well executed e-government systems need technological and culturally relevant competencies to make e-government responsive to e-citizens. In addition, there is no shortage of articles on government budget overruns tied to IT projects. The rush to have needed technologies has outpaced recruitment and training strategies to manage the technology infrastructure that makes e-government work. The infrastructure of e-government includes concepts tied to the provision of a seamless flow of services, logical one-stop-shops, efficiency, and an ability to do more with less. These concepts, however, will not support e-government indefinitely without adequate succession planning. The succession planning for this year and beyond must include training, maintaining and transitioning employees in a world where technical competencies need to be addressed and citizens clamor for more direct involvement. Succession planning can train employees to create a work culture that promotes accountability, transparency, efficiency, and build an appreciation for a competent representative bureaucracy. Succession planning, more than any other tool, can tap into the diversity pipeline, something that could narrow the digital divide. Human resources in the public sector faces fierce competition for talent. Talent is recruited nationally and internationally. Thus the public service is at risk if it persists in holding onto 20th century technology and 20th century cultural world-views.

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INTRODUCTION

Government public relations no longer happens solely through public relations professionals. It is now decentralized through blogs, social networks, text messaging, photo sharing, wikis and virtual worlds – the Web 2.0 World. Succession planning can address the benchmark strength in human resource capacity tied to e-government. The thrust of e-government requires a closer look at employees and the kind of talent needed to communicate through technology in a way that is usable, helpful and easy. E-government thus requires that management employ its talent differently. Without a tool to identify talent management needs and how to address them, e-government or any other kind of service delivery, will not meet the complex challenges currently posed by globalization, economic woes, unprecedented retirements, and existing challenges in the competition for talent. A skilled public work force and one trained for a world of globalization and increasing diversity will be needed in a twenty-first government that will have to govern with the aid of civil society (Huddleston, 2000).

E-GOVERNMENT RECRUITMENT

The practice of e-government will not achieve best practices status until it addresses systems of recruiting, maintaining, training and planning for the provision of public services. No doubt e-government is an integral part of public service delivery for many governments, particularly in the United States. Public Human resource organizations, however, have not been quick to take the lead in using Web 2.0 technologies that could benefit them including LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter – this is not an exhaustive list. Web 2.0 technologies are interactive and important to learning the communication venues frequented by Generation X. Recruitment of this generation will not be easy without embracing the online places

they frequently visit. The Obama administration is noted for attempting to revamp the federal government and making it “cool” for young people to work for the public service. Without embracing Generation X communication venues, however, it is tough to make government a desirable place for young professionals to work.

The recruitment benefits using Web 2.0, social media and social networking are not fully known. Still there is no better time to learn relevant social media tools. The variety of communication outlets means that there are many different ways to connect with talent and people looking for jobs. There are myriad online ways to learn about what the competition is doing in terms of recruitment. There are blogs (<http://www.recruitingblogs.com/>), web sites (<http://hrmtoday.com/>), wikis (<http://thehumanresource.wikispaces.com/page/diff/Home/88551151>) and more. In London for example, there is a civil service live network (<http://network.civilservicelive.com/>). These technologies bring dramatic changes in communication, which can be static, interactive, transactional or transformational (Melitski, 2003). The transformational usages of e-government are also evident where succession planning takes center stage.

e-government cannot exist without e-Public Servants to provide services to its e-Citizens. Each of the e-Players exists in concert. They are networked in a communication system that may include an e-Manager, e-Planner, or e-Collector of revenue working from their office or their home to offer a government service. Succession planning can assess whether a government has a workforce capable of facilitating the delivery of services in a networked system. If the prediction of unprecedented number of retirements does not move succession planning to the fore, the economy and technology will be a couple of major reasons to move to take an in depth review of succession planning and e-government (Roberts 2003; Roddy 2004).

Succession planning is a tool to continuously and systematically identify, assess and develop

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