Chapter 2.47
Soft Success Factors for M–Government

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ABSTRACT

This chapter proposes a reference "soft" competence framework to support both the implementation of m-government actions and the management of related organizational changes. Our framework focuses on organizational factors and competences that act as enablers of successful e-government and m-government implementation, and has been tested by means of an empirical analysis carried out in the major European countries. E-government and m-government policies are analyzed according to this framework, which is based on several dimensions, including centralization, involvement, leadership, learning, and soft skills. Key success factors are discussed and validated by empirical evidence. Finally, two significant cases of m-government projects, one successfully implemented and the other about to be implemented, are presented. Furthermore, the chapter aims at showing how soft factors are crucial for the success of m-government initiatives.

INTRODUCTION

Companies and institutions increasingly feel the need for strong organizational frameworks and soft skills, that is, behavioral and managerial skills to be integrated with technical competences (Spencer & Spencer, 1993). The importance of soft factors for e-government development has been recently discussed (CoBrA, 2004; OECD, 2003b). The Information Society Directorate-General of the European Commission (2004) has defined e-government as *"the use of information and com-*

munication technologies in public administrations combined with organizational change and new skills in order to improve public services and democratic processes and strengthen support to public policies".

From a more technical point of view, the UN (United Nations, 2003) has defined e-government as *the process by which public administration transforms internal and external relationships with the use of modern information and communication technology (ICT).*

In fact, the concept of e-government has been evolving in order to satisfy customers of public administrations by leveraging all the existing ICT technologies and channels. Mobile government, also referred to as m-government, is *the extension of e-government to mobile platforms, as well as the strategic use of government services and applications which are only possible using cellular/ mobile telephones, laptop computers, personal digital assistants and wireless internet infrastructure* (*Hutchinson Encyclopedia*, http://encyclopedia.thefreedictionary.com/M-government).

A broader definition is provided by Kushchu and Kuscu (2003), who defined m-government as *a strategy and its implementation involving the utilization of all kinds of wireless and mobile technology, services, applications, and devices for improving benefits to the parties involved in e-government including citizens, businesses, and all government units.*

Mobile devices and technologies allow to provide citizens with a more complete, flexible and pervasive service. Multi-channel service is a way to establish a new and closer relationship with users, as they can choose the most convenient medium to interact with the public administration (Bracchi & Mainetti, 2005).

Accordingly, m-government is not a replacement for e-government, rather it complements and completes it. As a successful implementation of e-government requires organizational change and new skills, according to the definition of ISDG

reported earlier, m-government too requires at least the same focus. In fact, m-government leads to new services and relationships, which need a deep internal re-organization. Consequently, most of the considerations about soft factors which apply to e-government apply to m-government too, as it may be considered an extension of it.

This chapter proposes a reference "soft" competence framework to support both the implementation of m-government actions and the management of related organizational changes. Part of the model and of the empirical evidence reported was developed within a project sponsored by the Italian Ministry for Public Administration to develop a local reference framework for e-government, but, as stated previously, it can be easily extended to m-government too.

The framework presented here (see also Capra, Francalanci, & Marinoni, 2005) focuses on organizational factors and competences that act as enablers of successful e-government and m-government implementation, and has been tested by means of an empirical analysis carried out in the United States, Canada, and in some major European countries (Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom).

Some fundamental concepts of management theory can be applied to the e-government and m-government development process:

- The implementation of successful and effective m-government services requires cultural changes among public administration managers and employees, who must develop a citizen-oriented attitude and learn to share the values of the information society.
- In order to stimulate cultural change among managers and employees, particular attention must be paid to organizational solutions and ways of learning (Senge, 1992; Senge et al., 1999), as well as empowerment (Piccardo, 1995; Zimmerman, 1990) and involvement of the teams in charge of developing

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