

Chapter 16

E-Government Considerations: A Focus on South Africa

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ABSTRACT

Governments are faced with a number of challenges that are due to the increase in the size of the population and the increase in demands from the population for efficient and effective access to services. While the needs of the citizens have evolved, government structures still reflect industrial-age organisational thinking based on a command-and-control model (Tapscott, 2010). In order to deliver services, substantial funding is required; at the same time, there has been a feeling that government has consumed too large a portion of the national income and that in general the payments made by the citizens have got to be curtailed. In this dilemma of being able to balance the supply and demand for services, government has looked at using ICT to modernise the service-delivery process. The South African government is using ICT to modernise its process; this chapter is an overview of the South African context.

INTRODUCTION

Counties worldwide are constantly creating new and innovate applications of ICT (Naidoo et al., 2011). One of the advantages of living in the 21st century is our unique ability to watch the world develop, from the development of the Europe Union to the dismantling of apartheid. With these social changes in the background, in the foreground there have been a ICT revolution. One of these technological innovations is the Internet, which has lead to the development of e-Government. Just as during the 19th century gold rush, the Internet has attracted many eager governments

who believe that this technology can be used to trasformate government. While explorers in the 19th century died in the harsh elements, today's e-Government developers only lose tax payers monies (Amor, 2001). In the design and development of these e-Government applications there exist several challenges. The manner in which these challenges are managed do affect the outcome of the application. Few government departments are praised for the appropriate use of ICT in the execution of their mandates. The South African Revenue Services (SARS) is one government agency that has effectively integrated ICT tools in the execution of its mandate (Cloete, 2012). One

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of the important attributes of the organisations management of its ICT is not only the leadership it offers but also the consistency of leadership over time. An analysis of SARS leadership structure shows that the organisation has stable leadership, see Table 1. Commissioners and CIO remain with the organisation without being redeployed to other sections of government and SARS reports on their ICT strategy in their annual reports.

However, this type of stable leadership which is believed to be a precursor for a successful ICT driven organisation is not the case in all government departments. The success of an ICT initiative is dependent on how stakeholders react to modernise programs.

CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND

Driven by growing pressure on government to deliver services in a efficient way, the use of ICT applications has been referred to as e-Government.

It is difficult to define e-Government (Joia, 2008; Kim & Kim, 2003), as it encompasses a broad spectrum of activities. Some definitions are technology driven while other definitions view e-Government are a transformative tool for government (Grant & Chau, 2005). In the examples below, e-Government is characterised as:

- The use of ICT, and particularly the Internet, as a tool to achieve better government (OECD, 2003).
- Government's use of ICT, particularly Web-based applications, to support responsive and cost-effective government by facilitating administrative and managerial functions, providing citizens and stakeholders with convenient access to government information and services, facilitating interaction and transactions with stakeholders, and providing better opportunities to participate in democratic institutions and processes (Annttiroiko, 2008).

Table 1. Heat map outlining SARS leadership

Year	Commissioner	CIO	Technology Strategy in Annual Report
1998-1999	Mr. P J Gordhan	Mr. P Pienaar	Yes
1999-2000		Mr. G Keyter	
2000-2001			Vacant
2001-2002			
2002-2003		Mr. Ken Jarvis	Yes
2003-2004			No
2004-2005			Yes
2005-2006			
2006-2007		Mr. Barry Hore	
2007-2008			
2008-2009	Mr. O Magashula		
2009-2010			
2010-2011			
2011-2012			
2012-2013	Mr. I Pillay		No

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