Chapter 13
The Impact of an ISSP on Public Service Delivery in the Digital Era

ABSTRACT

This chapter analyses the recommendations made in previous chapters, particularly those related to defining the ICT strategies of governments. The purpose of this analysis is to identify the management disciplines that come into play when defining an ISSP. Ten management disciplines were identified: corporate strategy, public administration processes and reform activities, human resources, operations, technology, customer relations, legal aspects, data utilisation, security, and managing of projects. These management themes are considered critical for the formulation of the ISSP. This chapter also analyses the relationship of the ISSP with the identified management disciplines and shows why defining an ISSP is a complex undertaking. Throughout the chapter, real-life examples are provided to illustrate the various points. The chapter discusses the impact of an ISSP on governments and public administration organisations in supporting corporate strategies and creating economic growth. The chapter posits that the ISSP document is as good as the futuristic vision of the nation's leaders.

INTRODUCTION

Sometime in the future, science will be able to create realities that we can't even begin to imagine. As we evolve, we'll be able to construct other information systems that correspond to other realities, universes based on logic completely different from ours and not based on space and time. Robert Lanza, Medical doctor, scientist and philosopher

According to the World Bank, ICT has the potential to reduce poverty, increase productivity, boost economic growth, and improve accountability and governance. Research by the Wold Bank suggests that increasing high-speed Internet connections can be a key source for economic growth. World Bank econometric analysis found that a ten percentage point increase in high-speed Internet connections boosts

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annual GDP growth in developing countries by 1.38 percentage point. Moreover, the ICT service industry is envisaged as an important source of job creation, particularly for the young and women. It is also viewed as a primary source for encouraging innovation across the economy that significantly increases productivity, which in turn supports trade and competitiveness initiatives. According to research from the World Bank, the extensive penetration of mobile telephony, which has seen a tremendous increase in text messaging and internet-enabled mobile networks and associated devices, has generated considerable prospects for governments and entrepreneurs alike to directly link up with citizens, civil society and businesses thus promoting and delivering their services much more efficiently than ever before.

However, the above is merely rhetoric if governments do not incorporate these aims (and many others) into a futuristic vision for their nation and subsequently express this vision into a futuristic ISSP. An ISSP is road map defining where governments want to be in the future. However, this ISSP road map is also part of the National road map (National Corporate Strategy) to ensure that an adequate pace of economic growth and development of a Nation takes place. The term "adequate pace" depends on the ambition and level of determination of those leading their country. Nations that have a national leader with a futuristic vision are very fortunate because having such an individual (or team of individuals) is not as widespread as one may imagine. Too often leaders are elected for their popularity and not for their intelligence and more importantly their vision. Having a national leader with the proper combination of popularity, intelligence and vision is utopia. These later remarks about leadership qualities may seem to be a digression from the ISSP formulation issue. However, the point that is being made is that it is not the ISSP document itself that is important, but what the ISSP document stands for and the vision that is at its foundation.

BACKGROUND

Governments that fail to embrace technology to make the transition to a revolutionary and futuristic digital environment will likely experience significant negative consequences, including poor budgetary performance; inadequate service delivery; hostile privacy and security violations; and ultimately loss or failure to gain people's trust. The vision for enhancing Public Service delivery in the digital era is to be based on the enhancement of the information society, where the creation, deployment, dissemination, integration and processing of information will become a primary and significant economic, social, educational and cultural activity.

Governments that do not have a well defined and adequate ISSP document will likely encounter a number of concerns. A major concern may materialize due to a lack of integration of information application systems, leading to duplication of effort; inaccuracies; delays; cost budget overruns; and duplication of sourcing in management information. The information application systems delays may not only adversely affect the over cost of the system but will delay the benefits that may be anticipated from the system. There may also be a lack of integration of technologies and related hardware devices that may lead to an inability to provide cross organisation information flows. The lack of integration of technologies and application systems will likely give rise to inflexible systems that may become a serious barrier to organisational change. Having inappropriate technologies and/or applications systems may seriously hinder strategic alliances, thus obstructing the formation of consortia or Public Private Partnerships. Moreover, capacity issues and technical resource requirements may be difficult to resolve owing to differing technologies.