

Chapter 16

Social Media and Web 2.0 for Rethinking E-Government Maturity Models

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ABSTRACT

In this chapter, the authors argue that social media and Web 2.0 technologies have the potential to enhance government responsiveness, representation, citizen participation, and overall satisfaction with the public policy-making process. To do that, this chapter suggests the dialectical approach of a new E-government maturity model through both New Public Service and Social Construction of Public Administration views. Then, they provide guidance to practitioners who are responsible for developing social media and Web 2.0 strategies for public service organizations. Finally, to provide guidelines for public administrators, this chapter argues that the “public sphere” should be redefined by citizen’s online social networking activities with public administrators and capacity building activities among practitioners in public service agencies through their use of social media and Web 2.0 tools.

INTRODUCTION

Since the birth of the Internet era, e-government was the buzzword describing many governments’ efforts to find the best practices of efficient and effective governing through digitalized tools. Their efforts have resulted in an E-government maturity

model which was developed to monitor whether governments are on the right track in terms of the organization and technical aspects (Anderson & Henriksen, 2006; Layne & Lee, 2001). Recently, with the development of social media and Web 2.0 technologies, a review of the traditional view of the E-government maturity model becomes necessary to recapture the new characteristics of these

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emerging interactive information technologies. Some examples of the most popular social media and Web 2.0 included: Facebook-www.facebook.com, Twitter-twitter.com, YouTube-www.youtube.com, Second Life-www.secondlife.com (and teen.secondlife.com), Del.icio.us-del.icio.us, Friendster-www.friendster.com, LinkedIn-www.linkedin.com, Flickr-www.flickr.com, MySpace-www.myspace.com, Netflix-www.netflix.com, Digg-www.digg.com, and last.fm-www.last.fm. A number of commentators who have optimistic views on the Internet argue that the social media and Web 2.0 tools will improve the relationship between citizens and public administrators in policy-making processes so that it can become possible to allow for a more participatory democracy or a more robust democracy (Nabatchi & Mergel, 2010; Galloway & Guthrie, 2010). In addition, they believe that the interactive two-way information and communication technologies can enhance the responsiveness, transparency, and accountability of government (Coleman & Gøtze, 2001; Welch, Hinnant & Moon, 2005; Bertot, Jaeger, & Grimes, 2010; Galloway & Guthrie, 2010). Now, almost every agency and department in the federal government has at least one Facebook organizational page and at least one official Twitter account (Mergel, 2010). According to Galloway & Guthrie (2010), more than 80% of organizations including government offices, independent agencies, multilateral institutions, industry associations and advocacy groups in the public sector have at least one social media site, 63% have blog(s) and 20% have some presence on mobile platforms. That is, social media and Web 2.0 have become a new means of communication for local, state, and federal governments as well as a wide variety of public organizations. Thus, it should be used in accordance with the new face of E-government.

However, information and communication technology cannot offer a guarantee to increase chances of better public service outcomes without an in-depth and proper understanding of its

working mechanism. For instance, social media works only if the agency is committed to its maintenance and operation in citizen-focused points of view. In the early era of Internet, with the rise of Web 1.0, one of the strongest pieces of advice given to governmental agencies and departments was that “an outdated homepage was worse than none at all” (Lee & Elser, 2010). The Obama administration is seeking to incorporate innovative uses of social media for enhancing government transparency (Coglianese, 2009). Citizens can submit questions to President Obama during a town hall meeting via Twitter, and the White House YouTube channel scores more than 34 million views (Galloway & Guthrie, 2010). As a part of the enthusiasm on social media and Web 2.0, a group of scholars have discussed the new model for the future of e-government and e-democracy (Mergel, 2010; Nabatchi & Mergel, 2010; Bertot, Jaeger & Grimes, 2010; Galloway & Guthrie, 2010; Staiou & Gouscos, 2010). This chapter will argue that social media and Web 2.0 technologies have the potential to enhance government responsiveness, representation, citizen participation, and overall satisfaction with the public policy-making process. To do that, this chapter suggests the dialectical approach of a new E-government maturity model through both New Public Service and Social Construction of Public Administration views (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2003; Jun, 2006). Additionally, guidance to practitioners who are responsible for developing social media and Web 2.0 strategies for public service organizations is provided in terms of the New Public Service and the Social Construction of Public Administration in this chapter. Finally, to provide guidelines for public administrators, this chapter will argue that the ‘public sphere’ should be redefined by citizen’s online social networking activities with public administrators and capacity building activities among practitioners in public service agencies through their use of social media and Web 2.0 tools.

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