E-Government Trends, Common Practices and Benefits

> *The question for public sector organizations is no longer "Should we?" Now it is "What is the Best Way …?"*
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> *E-government, the web-based online delivery of government services to its constituents, is the norm at all levels – federal, provincial/state, county and municipal – in developed countries. In developing countries, it is even becoming more achievable. But is this just for external services?*

The online delivery of government services to individual and commercial consumers, as well as other government entities, is not new. However, as it has become the norm for delivery of services, a few trends and common benefits have developed along the way.

There is a plethora of research data, case studies and trends analysis available on this topic. When we take a look at the available information, several trends and common benefits are apparent to us.

E-government Trends

In looking at the efforts of many different public sector organizations' e-government outcomes, several trends suggest that demand for e-government services continues and success is increasing:

- The ***proliferation of mobile computing devices and affordable connectivity*** continues to create a population that is capable and desirous of accessing services, government or commercial, wherever they are and whenever they want. The need for connectivity is even resulting in some communities providing extensive, affordable Wi-Fi networks.

- The ***emergence of cloud computing*** is providing affordable, high quality functionality for public sector organizations to use for many commodity functions, such as payment processing, search, collaboration and even extends to financial services and human resources. Infrastructure capabilities, such as database and storage, can also be a part of a cloud leveraging strategy.

- ***Innovation is increasing.*** Imagine being able to take a picture of your license plate with your camera phone and emailing that picture, along with verification and payment info, to process your renewal. Imagine having access to a map of your neighborhood and being able to click on a house on the map and either email or internet phone call any household that has opted in. The types and methods of services provided by government bodies has already gone beyond online registrations and information access and will continue to be more than we can currently imagine.

- ***Failure rates are decreasing*** in developed and developing countries as well. Although e-government failure rates are still higher than other types of projects, the anecdotal and quantitative data suggests rates are falling. A major factor in these failures is the slow rate of adaptation of government organizations' processes, methods and people to initiatives that go across traditional boundaries. The failure rates are decreasing, however, due to more successes to emulate, more commercial solutions and professional resources available, and a better understanding of how to staff and run these types of initiatives.

E-government Common Practices

Although many practices have been documented by a variety of sources on what works and/or what doesn't; the following represents some of the most critical concerns to watch in EAdirections' opinion:

- ***Define Business Needs, and then Apply Technology***. Although many organizations originally viewed e-government as a technology initiative, an opportunity to improve the way that governments conduct business is more clearly emerging as the main driver.

- ***Development of Enterprise Architecture Direction for E-government***. While many of the solutions for e-government are specific to a particular agency or department, the underlying infrastructure, security and privacy environment, information model and blueprint for development should be developed in a centralized, collaborative, and coordinated effort. Commonly, the enterprise architecture group is tasked with leading this effort, as well as supporting the effort to develop the business architecture for e-government, which is led by business professionals.

- ***Centralized Initiative/Program Management, Distributed Implementation on Standard Architecture***. Like any large enterprise-wide implantation, e-government is best served by having a centralized effort to plan and manage the overall program work effort, while the individual projects are the responsibility of distributed teams, utilizing standard components, architectures, practices and patterns across individually developed solutions.

E-government Benefits

Beyond the obvious benefits of reducing paperwork, streamlining processes, improving service, increasing consumer satisfaction, and increasingly complying with mandates for electronic delivery of services, other benefits are consistently realized through e-government initiatives:

- ***Improved information quality***. As public sector organizations provide more capabilities via electronic delivery, many encounter a significant barrier to continued success – multiple redundant, inconsistent and inaccurate sources of information. In order to be successful, many organizations have eliminated some or all of these sources, increased the quality of information they have on hand, and even mandated single points of entry for constituency data.

- ***Common platform for web-based and collaborative services***. Organizations are able to leverage the underlying infrastructure, information model, and solution development approaches for other system development efforts, commercial integration, internal collaboration and provide a basis for inclusion of future cloud and external provider offerings.

- ***Foundation for further innovation***. While not generally a strong point for fiscally-strapped, resource-constrained organizations, some public sector organizations have looked toward the future in developing their e-government offerings, not only through an adaptive architecture to build upon, but also by creating a culture in which innovation is not only sought, but expected.

> *Directions: When pursuing an e-government strategy, organizations should be aware of the trends influencing e-government delivery and demand, leverage the successful practices of other e-government initiatives, and seek benefits beyond the traditional.*