

COLLABORATION: THE NEW EGOVERNMENT ECOSYSTEM

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Abstract

“Electronic Government models have been evolving over the years. Service delivery has been the target for most electronic government approaches. New trends in information technology, innovation models, the net generation, and new rules that govern information society make us think in a new e-government ecosystem”.

Keywords: e-government, ecosystem, collaboration.

1 INTRODUCTION

According to James Moore in his renowned article “Predators and Prey: A New Ecology of Competition”¹, natural ecosystems sometimes collapse, when environmental conditions change radically. The environment in this case is the information technology platform which supports all service delivery for citizens. Internet technology platform is changing very fast from networks of websites that enables government agencies to show information to a computing platform in which citizens can interact with government in a new different way.

The second generation of internet is evolving, web 2.0 and web 3.0, semantic web are new buzzwords in the marketplace. Besides those buzzwords there is a new way of doing business which change the environment and create a new ecosystem. Eventually, this new environment will affect government relationships and electronic government strategies.

New generation of web based communities are becoming popular among people, especially from the net generation². These communities sooner or later will start demanding this kind of relationship to organizations and government agencies as well as public officers from a citizen perspective will start demanding to agencies this type of organization.

Some questions arise; how all the changes in internet platform will change the way citizens communicate and work with governments? Will this new way of communication and collaboration change the current service delivery offered to citizens?

2 INTERNET SOCIAL NETWORK

We are facing a new revolution in the information society which breaks some boundaries. According to sociologists, persons have a limit for social relationships. Dunbar's number (150) it's the maximum number of individuals with whom any one person can maintain stable relationships. The appearance of

¹ In Harvard Business review May – Jun 1993

² Term coined by Don Tapscott in his book “Growing up Digital” which describes the generation of people who have grown up with computer technology.

Internet social networks change this proposal and can make people get involve with an infinite numbers of people and keep stable relationships. It's like an upgrade of the hard disk which somebody can use to save information about your relations and load it when it's need it.

Collaboration networks or social networks like Facebook, Hi5, Friendster, window live spaces, LinkedIn and myspace are just the peak of the iceberg. Behind that there is a new way of socialize and think. This community has many features that make them unique; Participation, critical thinking, exchanging views are part of their day to day life. Internet social activities created a web of relationships from friendship to education. Working activities is not away from this internet platform, companies are using tools like blogs and wikis to enhance knowledge and communications within an organization.

Will these features affect government to citizen relationships? The answer is yes, governments can use this active community to enhance public discussion and involve citizens in public issues, collaborating with exchange views, new ideas and innovation. This is a very powerful tool for democracy. Politicians needs to understand that a good way to engage citizens is involving them in the political decision making, listening to them and incorporating citizens ideas inside public policy.

3 PEER TO PEER NETWORKING.

The way of producing goods and services has been changing. Open source software can be a good example of how a peer to peer production system works in the internet world. Linux and wikipedia are results of this type of production systems which are based in a community working system. A new way of organization with a different hierarchy and relationship system is on the road. Most of this activities are totally voluntary and with no monetary return.

Let's analyse the motivations of this community to produce new things. First. there is some form of altruism to find a collective benefit from something that somebody did, second there is lot of passion to find answers before anybody else and finally, in my opinion the most important, to be public recognized to be a member of a recognized community and all the inputs he have give to the product or service are an outstanding development or contribution. This last motivation is essential as is indirectly a form of gain some lines in a CV which can yield a better job.

How can governments take advantages of this community? I considered this is particularly appealing for people to get involved in a public project for the reason that the results will influence directly in their personal relationship with their government and their community itself. For instance, imagine if tax agencies open software code from tax return software³ to citizens. Developers from everywhere within the community can add features and functionalities the community needs to create a better service.

Governments can get better services from this approach. Collaboration can be an important instrument to involve citizens in public projects which will return a better directly services for them. Break bureaucratic barriers which is a governments feature is the task goal.

³ Tax agencies from some countries developed tax returns software to help tax payer fill their returns

4 CONCLUSIONS

A new environment condition has been created which dramatically changed the existed electronic government ecosystems and create a new one. New technologies are changing very fast how people get involve in public projects and a way of relationships among citizens.

The new platform gives citizen a new power that will modify electronic government models changing the way government controls the service delivery. It would be important to adapt the current service delivery to the new environment. Furthers discussion among the new ecosystem service delivery will need to be set.

Governments need to realize that this kind of relationships will change the way communication from government to citizen and from citizen to government works. There is a full potential of this approach that governments can take advantage to implement as an electronic government strategy.

In all these context there are some specific issues to be discussed:

- Collaboration network is a new powerful tool to develop democracy.
- A new breed of public officers with a collaborative thinking will start changing public organizations.
- Community working system is a new way public services delivery will be offered.

References

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