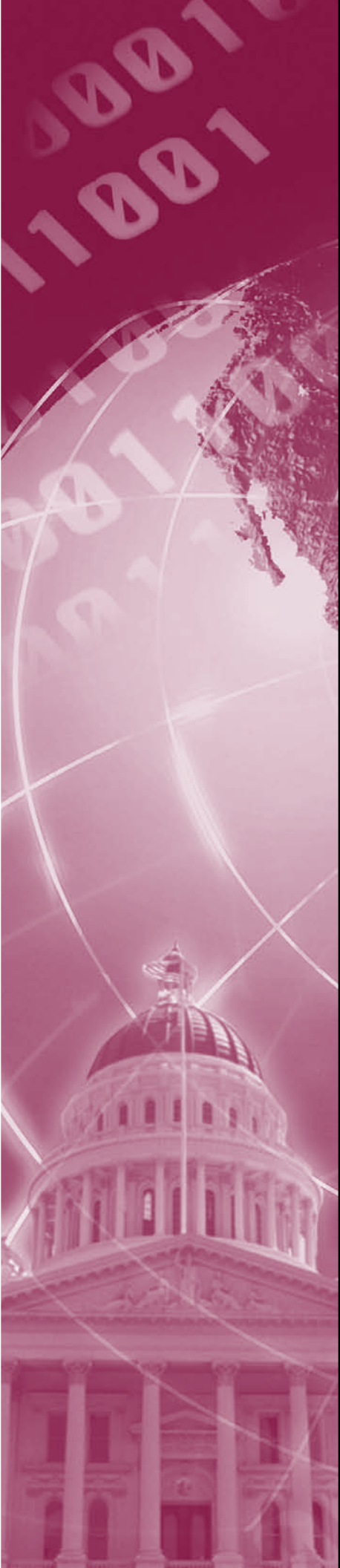


ENGAGE:

Creating e-Government that Supports Commerce,
Collaboration, Community and Commonwealth



Executive Summary: Marks of Maturity

This white paper is all about the “e” — where it has been, where it is now, and where it is going. Even as the prefix “e” is falling away in the language used to talk about government modernization, the underlying technologies and practices introduced with e-government a decade ago are now deeply embedded in the way the public’s business gets done.

Not only have networked technologies pierced silos within government, they have brought the walls down around government — blurring the lines between serving the citizen and helping your neighbor. In fact, if the first decade of e-government was about dot-com’ing government, the next decade may be defined as dot-gov’ing Jiffy Lube, Wal-Mart and thousands of retail chains and local businesses across America.

These changes hold the promise of extending government’s capacity at incremental cost while allowing communities to act like communities. The changes also raise a number of important questions about how to work through the complexity that comes with bringing together organizations, systems and entire sectors. This white paper is organized around a dozen questions often heard by those in and around electronic government about its future. In answering those questions, the Center for Digital Government lays out its five marks of e-government maturity that provide road signs for the journey ahead.

In the end, these new approaches revisit a tested and trusted approach. Governments have long relied on sub-agents. Typically subagents were so-called mom and pop retail operations that stood in for public servants when the timely completion transactions required an over-the-counter exchange of information and money. Electronic government extended the reach of government to expanded networks of subagents — both the carbon-based agents that live in communities across the country and software agents that do not mind working evenings, weekends and the overnight shift.

Despite that, some people have speculated that the era of e-government is dead. To paraphrase Mark Twain, “The rumors of e-government’s demise have been greatly exaggerated,” and the nay-sayers couldn’t be more wrong.

Now is precisely the time leaders should look to the tools of technology to help shape the future of governance because e-government remains the only service delivery channel that scales at incremental cost and provides a rare safety net in the delivery of public services in an era of infinite demand and finite resources.

I. Introduction: Government Where and How You Live

What has changed?

People are using dot-gov the same way they use dot-com¹ — to make their lives easier and to take greater control over things that were previously the domain of experts. They check crime, school performance and property value statistics before buying a house. They check the credentials and licensing status of hospitals, clinics, doctors, dentists and nurses before making an appointment. They renew their own professional and driver’s licenses online, pay parking tickets

and taxes, reserve camping spaces and subscribe to hazard alerts which are delivered to their cell phones in the case of child abductions, natural disasters or public safety emergencies. And homeowners and contractors go online to manage the permit and inspection process. Digital government is about putting citizens and businesses in charge of their transactions with government.²

Double-digit growth in the use of online self-service government over the last biennium suggests that there is a strong appetite for things that take the complexity out of life. That is reinforced by a longitudinal study of how Americans

actually use the Internet. The *Pew Internet and American Life Project* reports that three-quarters of American adults find the Internet helpful in doing their jobs and other things that are important to them.³

The people whom governments serve have moved online more quickly and more robustly than governments themselves, despite significant achievements in jurisdictions of all shapes, sizes and locales. At issue is government's willingness and ability to confront complexity behind the curtain of bureaucracy so online services do what people expect in a way that matches the best of their dot-com experiences. In doing so, government has the opportunity to mine the costs out of its own processes, automate the process, and tie together formerly discrete systems.

To that end, a growing number of governments are partnering up in a networked world to extend the value of

systems that do the heavy lifting in conducting the public's business by combining them in novel ways with allied systems that may have grown up elsewhere in government, the private sector or not-for-profit service organizations. Indeed, as will be discussed in the pages that follow, engaging citizens and businesses requires rethinking old assumptions about e-government – not because they were wrong but because government then lacked the ability to execute in a way that is required a decade after the introduction of electronic government. Success in the next decade is about engaging the citizen on one side of the equation and engaging network partners on the other.

The question before us is this: under what circumstances does a collective desire to act together in the common interest emerge? A look backward provides some important lessons.

II. Rewind: Resetting the Proposition

What have we learned?

The original aims and promises of e-government are still valuable and highly desirable. It created the opportunity in the mid-1990s for government technologists who had never been included in the political process to politically exploit the popular fascination with the Internet. E-government pioneers heralded the dawn of a new digital age. Like a modern day Paul Revere, many stood in bureaucratic bell towers and signaled the beginning of the "Digital Revolution."

Unfortunately, all of the excitement created some unreasonably high expectations. If you call something transformational, people tend to expect transformation. History shows that in many cases the changes that have actually taken place have primarily resulted in creation of a new state of uncertainty. That is because to date, too often e-government has suffered from a lack of formal planning and has largely been built on "targets of opportunity" and been fed with "low-hanging fruit." What has been missing is a consistent, unifying strategy for transformation.

True transformation takes time, money and a willingness to break with the past, often in favor of a promising but radically different future, and one where many of the details remain unknown. The combined effects of the recent public sector revenue recession, wide scale political turnover at the state level and a reprioritization of resources focused on homeland security has caused a major analyst house to conclude that e-government has slumped into a "trough of despair." Such a "been there, done that, got the Web site" view of the world misses the larger point, and the larger opportunity. Those externalities make it all the more important to finish what e-government started 10 years ago.

III. Points Of Arrival, Points Of Departure

What should we do?

The reality is electronic government is now at a crucial juncture. The foundational work of introducing the concepts of change to state and local organizations has been done and the technology itself is now capable and powerful enough to produce astonishing benefit. Now is the time to make good on the promises of the pioneers.

That said, it has been difficult to share and maintain the enthusiasm necessary to energize policy and decision-makers new to public service. This can result in the lack of a clear and unifying vision able to compete successfully for necessary resources in difficult financial times for one of the very few things – advanced e-government – that represents a scalable solution in an environment of infinite demand.

The European Commission, led by the Oxford Internet Institute at Oxford University, has identified several factors that contribute to the need for a sustained programmatic approach to e-government. Without such a strategy:

- the short-term costs of developing, implementing and maintaining technology systems often dominate e-government financial impact assessments and political debate because they come before the benefits and are easier to measure, particularly when many benefits are of a more qualitative character.
- the lack of coordination and harmonization between federal, state and local government institutions can present a dauntingly complex set of challenges to establishing appropriate e-government networks and services crossing governance, administrative and geographic boundaries.
- resistance to innovation sometimes results in turf wars among public administration management and staff. Such resistance also prohibits organizational redesign and process reengineering necessary to move to new forms of networked governance. Such new forms of networked governance support e-government services that cut across traditional administrative responsibilities and organizational structures.
- fears about inadequate security and privacy safeguards and controls undermine confidence in e-government applications involving sensitive personal information, vulnerability to online fraud or other illegal or abusive e-government risks.

- incompatibilities in hardware, software or networking infrastructures within and between public agencies, along with flaws in the user interface or usability of systems, can hamper the ways agencies interact with citizens and businesses. These operational problems can sabotage even potentially successful services and discourage those experiencing them from trying other e-government opportunities.⁴

None of these barriers are insurmountable. The track record suggests that many state and local governments have found ways to overcome them and make progress despite them. To succeed, they have created an engaged community of cross-sector collaborators to take on the complexity of old government and make next-generation government modernization happen. Such next-generation governments often integrate public service delivery into the combined work of public, private, and civic not-for-profit organizations. In doing so, they have taken the next vital step in the evolution of e-government, moving from basic communication and commerce to collaboration, community and commonwealth.

Just as budget problems, electoral changes and new challenges can simultaneously distract and remind us of the important public work set before us, talk of commonwealth can seem counterintuitive in our day. It may, however, hold the key to finishing what the e-government movement started. A recent commentary on public radio about public investments in libraries is instructive.

One Saturday, I drove over to the town library to bring back some books. It was closed, so I put them in the return receptacles. I had forgotten the library was closed on Saturdays now...

We're also closing an elementary school, letting teachers go and wrestling over reduced police, fire and emergency services. We simply can't afford them, a lot of people said.

But it was the closed doors of the library that got me thinking about commonwealth. The message of the voters here and in other places seems to be that we simply can't afford to do things together anymore. Maybe it's a good thing libraries exist now because with our attitude, we would never start them today.

Imagine there were no libraries. And imagine someone saying, "Hey, I've got a great idea. Let's get the government and business and people to give a bunch of money and we'll build a building and in it we'll put books and recordings and movies and magazines and computers and anyone can use them. For free." People would say, "Are you out of your mind?"

But democracy works better when all citizens have access to information and some basic services. In that sense, an open library door paid for by all of us symbolizes the heart of what we say we hold dear. That's what commonwealth is.⁵

Libraries and e-government have much in common. Both were and are great ideas. Their existence is the result of the leadership, commitment and investment by a community that recognized their value. Once established, both can be taken for granted and both must rely on friends to actively promote their interests and prospects for contributing to solutions of new and complex problems – a coalition of public, private and not-for-profit organizations. Such coalitions and communities of interest are often the difference between those libraries that change, adapt and grow to remain relevant and important resources in their communities, and those that languish and suffer a slow demise from a thousand little cuts.

IV. Complexity: Yesterday's Obstacle, Tomorrow's Opportunity

What do we do now?

Government is but one component of the modern social environment — an environment that is becoming ever more complex. Government is expected to meet the challenges of the day. To do so, government must provide a sophisticated and complex approach to service delivery. People looking to engage government electronically do so to engage the service — they don't care about the systems. Unfortunately, government has often been slow to realize the full importance of this distinction and has been too focused on the details of the systems, both technical and human. The first systems and services created were the ones most easily accomplished, the "low-hanging fruit," and not necessarily the most valuable or beneficial to the public. Future success in meeting the public's expectations can be found in moving from the early states of e-government, marked by posting packaged information to a system of joined-up services involving several agencies, institutions and partners.

The concept is what P.K. Agarwal had in mind when he first evangelized around what is now known as P.K.'s ladder, or PITIT — publish, interact, transact, integrate, transform.⁶ For its part, the Swedish Agency for Administrative Development digested the five rungs into only four — *Information*, *Interaction*, *Transaction* and *Integration* — in its evolutionary model. Each stage is described in turn:

- **Stage 1: Information** pivots on the presentation of static material such as publications and information about the services provided by the agency. This information is seen as "packaged" by the agency, with only limited possibilities to interact with the Web site.
- **Stage 2: Interaction** is providing "interactive information." This includes the possibility for basic interaction with the Web site. This stage is represented by services such as searching in agency databases, ordering printed publications, downloading and ordering forms relating agency services and subscribing to newsletters from the agency.
- **Stage 3: Transaction** includes picking up and leaving personal information related to the services provided by the agency. This includes initiating and following agency-specific services.
- **Stage 4: Integration** addresses the integration of services between government agencies. This is the realization of a one-stop government that, regardless of organizational boundaries, provides services at one point of entry, even where several agencies are involved.⁷

Whether you prefer the five rungs of climbing P.K.'s ladder or the four stages of Swedish e-volution, they all collapse into the first of five inflection points in the maturation of a sustainable enterprise-class e-government program.

V. Five Marks of e-Government Maturity: A Programmatic View

What's the point?

1) Pressure Points:

Information, Transactions, Communication and Participation

E-government is not immune from the external pressures of progress and must exist and prosper within the larger context of modern life. The ways people get information and access infrastructure are changing, as are the ways we interact, communicate and engage each other.

Echoing the Pew findings about how real consumers really use the Internet, one analysis found that technologists need to take the lead in introducing technologies that have originated in the consumer market and hold the promise of transforming the way work gets done. The IT department's new charge where consumer technologies are concerned is to "smooth their entry, accelerate their spread, make them safe and secure, and exploit their benefits for the organization."⁸

The Columbia University School of International and Public Affairs reminds us of the proliferations of earlier consumer technologies, noting that success in promoting intergovernmental coordination and the advent of powerful self-service information tools have caused today's professionals to routinely begin the workday by checking their e-mail and key Web sites. Professionals and elementary school students alike have abandoned research libraries, insisting instead on online searches, electronic indices, data and analysis.

The consumer experience is intended to be sticky or habitual, characterized by repeated or even continuous use. In contrast, e-government is often deadline-driven and occasional. An average citizen may rarely use a particular service, perhaps only once a year – filing income taxes, renewing car tags and the like. The challenge is to deliver positive, satisfying virtual experiences and create incentives for people to disregard the more familiar paper-based processes and choose to do business with government electronically.

2) Point of View:

Shifting Perspectives

As electronic government initiatives and the organizations using them to deliver services mature, expectations

and perspectives shift from a focus on simple information dissemination to one of active participation in the governance process.

Initially governments approached electronic service delivery as entrepreneurs seeking to develop a new business. The rush of discovery and invention often came at the expense of participation and collaboration.

That is now changing. There is a renewed interest in civic participation; a more engaged citizenry expects greater government transparency. The information capacity available on the Internet allows citizens to become more knowledgeable about government and political issues, and the interactivity of the medium allows for new forms of communication with elected officials. The posting of contact information, legislation, agendas and policies makes government more transparent, potentially enabling more informed participation both online and offline.

For example, in 2003 the city of Tucson recognized that the community and the region were facing a series of difficult issues related to growth, infrastructure investment and economic development, to name a few.

The issues were complex and required the government to provide the community with a great deal of information in a way that was understandable. It also required a quick, easy mechanism for policymakers to get information back from constituents. A combination of technologies – including the city Web site, a telephone comment line, a customer relationship management (CRM) system and the cable television station – were brought together to create an ongoing and transparent community conversation. The city presented issues on television and the Web site. People questioned, commented and responded via a corresponding Web site comment board or through the telephone hotline. Responses were analyzed to identify areas where the community needed more information. Tucson then designed a new television program aimed at providing concise, understandable information on the critical decisions, important initiatives and emerging issues.

With the continuum of constituent questions, multimedia information targeted at answering those questions, feedback on the information provided, and public conversations on the Web site, Tucson moved past the historic inclination to insulate public sector Web sites from becoming public forums. Technology

was used to change the nature of interaction between a government and its constituents. As community members saw an easy way to participate in the discussion and the city responded to their questions and concerns, more people began to interact with their government. People did not stop attending meetings held by the mayor and council, but finally people who could not take time away from work or family to attend such a meeting at city hall had a chance for their voices and concerns to be heard, and to become part of the public process.

However, this type of open, frank conversation is not for the faint of heart. Community members often spoke with candor, and were sometimes quite liberal with their criticism of city government and government employees. Despite its success, this form of community conversation and engagement was discontinued as soon as the executive sponsor left city government.

3) Points Where Front and Back Meet: *e-Government, Integration and Collaboration*

There is more to government than talk, and there is more to electronically connecting the front and back ends of government than hooking the pieces together. Creating a citizen/customer-facing electronic door into the processes of government requires a technical configuration and an integration of the tools with the best practices of public service personnel management. To put it another way, there is both a technical and human infrastructure requirement.

In Nebraska, 185 of 186 county and circuit courts have joined forces to build a single searchable portal to house their combined 4 million-plus court records. The service now supports more than 45,000 court record searches per month. The adoption of a shared system has reduced the number of court staff assigned to record and enter information into multiple systems. It has also reduced the number of phone calls court staff receive from people looking for information. The system is funded by transaction fees charged for advanced searches or high-volume searches. While there is no charge for an initial name search that produces a list of possible matches, users who conduct searches by case number or choose to access detailed case information are charged a small fee per record. A monthly flat fee is also available for high-volume users. According to Bill Miller, deputy state court administrator for IT, the popular system has made access to judicial information easier for court staff, attorneys and the general public.⁹

4) More than a Point Solution:

Turning Portal Assumptions on Their Head

Internet portals were originally characterized as the new front door to government. The underlying organizational assumption was that the new front door also ought to be the only front door. Finally, government would be organized in a citizen-friendly way ... but it would be organized by the government. That model cannot hold. Portals may remain the front door, but the Internet has opened the back and sides of government in ways that government itself could not have imagined. As a result, portals are becoming a non-exclusive aggregator for useful online services that stand behind it.

At present, the governments that show the most concern for the citizens' demands are organizing their homepages on the Internet with "life situations" or "life events" categories. Information and services are placed at the population's disposal in an integrated and complete way, regardless of whose departments are in charge of them. The ordinary person does not need to know how government is being structured to get a service, as long as the services are accessible in a logical sequence. In addition, the government pages have links to the private pages for profit or nonprofit organizations.¹⁰

Dr. Robert Atkinson, president of the Information Technology and Innovation Foundation, argues that the potential of third-party portals to integrate a wide array of governmental (and non-governmental) information is enormous, and has barely been tapped. Take boat registration for example. While it should be a simple task, registering a boat can be quite complicated. The evidence can be found on boating Web sites, which are filled with queries from boat owners asking how to register their boat. Atkinson's prescription is something he calls "Turbo government," a play on the popular consumer software for filing and paying taxes online.¹¹

Depending on the state, the answers vary widely. Some states require an inspection; some require payment of local county tax and state registration fees. In Kansas, registrations are handled by the Parks and Wildlife Department, and in Virginia, by the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries. Some boats, depending on their size and use, must be registered with the federal government. The process would be much easier if a vertical boat registration portal were made available for boat owners in all 50 states.

This kind of approach, whether enacted by for-profit or nonprofit organizations, helps government agencies be more nimble and streamline bureaucratic processes where restrictions slow government's online efforts.¹²

VI. Collaboration: Digital Barn Raising

Why can't government go it alone anymore?

Effective jurisdictional collaboration is built upon an understanding of the needs of both the organization and the citizens. True collaboration goes beyond simple information sharing; it springs from a citizen-centric view of service provision.

More specifically, true and valuable collaboration will increase both information content and the number of services available to citizens. Perhaps most importantly, true and valuable collaboration considers how those services and information can make the average person's obligations to the state easier, and considers how it can improve the means of the government accountability.

In this sense, it is extremely important for each branch of government to keep the citizens' real and practical needs in mind. Services and information should not only be presented because it is easy to do, but in response to the population's real interests. What matters most is not the number of services being provided, but the way they can simplify citizens' daily life.

One such example of effective jurisdictional collaboration is the State of Tennessee One-Stop Business Resource, which allows new businesses to complete all required paperwork electronically with state agencies through a single Web site.

The Tennessee One-Stop Business Resource provides business owners with a secure user name and password that allows information to be saved and updated as needed. The resource also provides the flexibility to log-in and work on new business set-up when it's most convenient for the business community. The service automates the new business forms issued by various state agencies, generates online confirmation numbers for record keeping at every stage of the new business set-up process, and delivers quality customer support 24 hours per day, seven days per week.

Nine state government entities worked in collaboration to create this system: the Governor's Office, Secretary of State and departments of Economic and Community Development,

Revenue, Labor and Workforce Development, Commerce and Insurance, Environment and Conservation, Agriculture, Health and the Office of Information Resources.

To be valuable and successful, e-government must be seen not just as a set of tools but as a management policy centered on citizens' needs, bringing together different elements of service delivery and improving government responsiveness and accountability.

To accomplish this, government needs to reach outside itself to engage and collaborate with the larger community. Active third parties including for profit and nonprofit organizations are ready to collaborate.

In making the case for turbo charging government, Robert Atkinson writes, "the default attitude to present only their agency's information and applications. As a result, it doesn't appear that governments acting alone will any time soon make the kinds of fundamental changes needed to bring about true citizen-centered e-government."

It's time to build on this model by empowering for-profit and nonprofit organizations to help citizens and businesses interact electronically with government, particularly in areas that are inherently complex or involve cross-agency and cross-government functions.

To do this, governments must think of themselves less as direct providers of e-government services and more as enablers of third-party integrators that tie together multiple agencies across multiple levels of government to package information, forms, regulations and other government services and requirements in user-friendly ways.

Moving to Atkinson's turbo-government model has the potential to dramatically boost the uptake of digital government services, cut costs for both government and users, and make the experience of dealing with government less frustrating. Intermediaries can play two key roles: building and operating function-based portals, and creating digital integration tools.¹³

VII. Communities of Interest: Common Ground

With whom does government partner?

The future of e-government will be partnership-driven. However, a major challenge for government will be to simultaneously manage partnerships internally across government(s) and externally across sectors. Today's partnerships are not just technical. More and more, communities of interest are approaching and engaging government, wanting to help define the nature and scope of electronic services.

In Montana, an online service allows auto dealers to electronically process temporary license plates for new car sales. The service came about not because auto dealers wanted an online solution, but rather at the urging of survivors of highway patrol troopers killed in the line of duty. The offline process had a gap that caused multi-week processing delays that

created a potentially dangerous situation for law enforcement officials — information on cars with temporary tags could not be accessed through state law enforcement databases. The new temporary permit replaces handwritten forms by electronically generating a unique number and detachable proof of temporary registration containing an easy-to-read permit. The temporary permit is the size of a standard license plate featuring an eight-character code used by law enforcement for identification purposes.

As these new partnerships are formed with communities of interest outside government, questions of leadership and resources will be paramount. The ability of policymakers and CIOs to manage both the political and technical nature of these partnerships and orchestrate change across government will be a critical success factor.

VIII. Commonwealth and the “Long Tail” of Public Service: “E” is for Everything and Everybody

How big is the opportunity?

Agreements to put online licensing and regulatory applications in the hands of a growing universe of private- and not-for-profit agents or outlets extends the reach of government, making the portal a non-exclusive aggregator for the useful online services that stand behind it. In an age of agents (software and carbon-based) and Web services, it is useful to revisit assumptions about partnering with the private sector and elsewhere to deliver services through new channels. Channel expansion further expands the value of existing systems and both production and archival data — it is, in short, the long tail¹⁴ of government service delivery.

A number of non-governmental sites have developed cross-jurisdiction, customer-focused applications that extract information from thousands of governmental organizations into a system that brings consistency to data across many dissimilar providers.

One example is Earth911.org, established to help governments meet their legal mandates to provide timely and comprehensive environmental information and to empower citizens with community-specific resources necessary to improve the environment, including recycling. As a comprehensive portal, Earth911.org receives environmental information from 10,000 localities across the United States. It allows residents to enter their ZIP codes to locate current beach water quality information or find disposal/recycling sites for more than 250 items such as used oil, old tires, grass clippings or outdated medicines, and where to find electric vehicle charging stations. Corporations such as Mobil, Staples and Home Depot, to name a few, provide funding for the portal. Underwriting businesses can claim to support responsible environmentalism in this way. It is convenient and cost-effective for businesses, and the public benefits by getting easy access to the most current information available without having to expend tax dollars to get it.¹⁵

IX. Commerce and Offsetting Costs: The Bottom Line

How does government change its cost structure by shifting focus from applications to transactions?

Across the nation there are examples of government using revenue generated through the purchase and renewals of special purpose and professional licenses to generate revenue to support a broad e-government agenda. For example, since August 2003, the point-of-sale (POS) system for the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR), the agency that issues hunting and fishing licenses, has been available for use in retail outlets including all Alabama Wal-Mart stores. Working with a third-party provider hired by the Alabama Department of Natural Resources, Wal-Mart has embraced this technology and has a 100 percent adoption rate within all Alabama stores. The third-party provider of the system receives a transaction fee for every license sold over-the-counter by participating agents. In many cases, the retailers are willing to share the agent fee they receive from the state in order to participate in the online system. Alabama portal officials point out that the POS system is open to all authorized sales agents across the state and has been a huge success.

Currently, Alabama has more than 160 authorized retail sales locations using the POS system and has processed more than one million licenses since mid-2003. The agents experience many benefits from the system. Some of the most notable benefits are the elimination of paper log books, automated reporting systems, and license management capabilities (printing/reprinting, voiding, etc.). Each year there is an increase in the number of authorized agents requesting access to the system.¹⁶

Government agencies have explored and developed several mutually beneficial financing methods for e-government in an attempt to reduce dependence on general legislative appropriation.

Some of the most successful methods have been the creation of public-private partnerships that initially assign much of the financial burden of development to commercial partners. Once the systems are up and running, the private partner receives a return on their investment through a share in the revenue generated through new IT systems.

In some cases, vendors are also willing to be paid based on a share of the savings generated by the systems they provide. Government will benefit by receiving a system without having to spend a lot of money up front. The system developer is paid with money generated through increased efficiencies and savings. Virginia and California have taken this approach to modernize their tax departments. As vendors take on increased financial risk for providing technology systems, a partnership is created in place of the historical customer and vendor relationship.

A variety of funding models have been established by various governments together with their service delivery partners to support e-government innovation. The range of options has included fixed fee models, transaction-based funding, time and materials contracts and upfront development subsidies. More often than not, a combination of these models designed to meet the specific needs of a particular jurisdiction has proven to be the key to success.

X. Convenience: e-Government and the Experience Economy

Why does government have any business talking about citizens as customers?

E-government can be classified in three ways, depending on who is going to benefit:

- 1) **Government to Citizen (G2C)** makes it more convenient for average citizens to fulfill their civic obligations.
- 2) **Government to Business (G2B)** develops solutions for companies or to make doing business with government easier.
- 3) **Government to Government (G2G)** reduces complexity and cost and improves collaboration between agencies and levels of government.

The Utah State Tax Commission and Department of Motor Vehicles have partnered with many state-approved vehicle inspection stations as diverse as Jiffy Lube, Elmer's Car Clinic and major auto dealerships to provide on-site vehicle tag renewals. Once the required emissions and safety inspections are performed, the garage technician can directly access the state system, process the renewal and provide the registration sticker to the customer before they leave the facility. Utah has given the private sector the freedom to set and adjust convenience fees in order to drive additional traffic to their businesses.¹⁷

This system creates benefits for all three G2 constituencies. People needing to renew their vehicle registration have a convenient way to accomplish it while already engaged in meeting the regulatory inspection requirement. Business provides what has traditionally been a government service and can use this service to generate profit or attract new customers. Government agencies are relieved of the cost and complexity of having to process the transactions.

XI. Control Versus Catalysts: Pick Your Motivation

How do the right incentives change government behavior?

As previously discussed, effective electronic government is not achieved by simply putting government services online. Effective e-government requires a fundamental rethinking of government service process, policy and tools. Such a change can only be accomplished when organizational operation and culture are aligned to accompany technological change. How best to achieve that magical mix has been a fundamental question from the start.

As electronic government efforts have matured, the manner in which incentives for change are created has also changed. In the early days, progress came from entrepreneurial experimentation in technology departments — often without expressed direction or authority. As elected policy-makers began to take more notice of the Internet and the technological boom of the 1990s, both executive and legislative direction began to influence the e-government agenda.

The time has finally come when it is possible to move beyond reliance on adolescent “nobody told me not to” or paternalistic “because I said so” approaches. Today’s leading jurisdictions are building their service delivery futures on partnership with the private and nonprofit sectors, resulting in the proverbial “win-win” of good government and good business.

For example, the state of Utah, working with a private sector partner, has developed the Utah State Construction Registry that provides users with a standardized, statewide system for filing and managing preliminary construction notices as well as notices of commencement and completion. This system helps property owners minimize unknown project liability and risk. It also supports the business community by helping protect construction lien rights for residential, public and commercial projects. When legislation creating a new legal framework was being developed, discussions between government, industry and technology officials led to agreement that no traditional paper process would be created and that the solution would only be offered electronically.

Another innovative example of government service delivery is the Oklahoma State Treasurer’s Online Electronic Trading System. This system allows banks and other investors to bid on state T-bills and T-bonds electronically. Private sector financial institutions approached the treasurer’s office and asked for a quicker and more concise way to bid on state securities. Working together, state officials and financial institutions created a business solution that is responsive to their mutual professional self-interest.

In these ways, the traditional model is being augmented — in some cases even eclipsed — by incentives and other catalysts to create new habits around complex services that are more consistent with community-based collaboration among interested parties.

XII. Conclusion: Getting it Right the Next Time

What are you going to do?

History is the foundation of the future, recorded in both language and deeds. The history of e-government, while relatively short, is a fisherman's stew of success and disappointment. When language and deeds fail to synchronize, the result can only be confusion and uncertainty. Baseball great Yogi Berra said, "If you don't know where you are going, you might wind up someplace else."¹⁸

Yogi should feel right at home among the pioneers of electronic government. The language of electronic government has often been bigger and better than the reality. Remember the metaphor of the information superhighway — current some years ago, but now almost forgotten? Perhaps that is because the "superhighway" was viewed more as the means to a destination than as the conduit for a long journey through uncharted territory. Over time we have learned that one cannot simply follow the road to "e-government land" as if that magical place was located somewhere between Adventureland and Fantasyland.

The early pioneers of electronic government set out for a new place full of the optimism and courage that has always fueled pioneers. Over time it has become clear that despite beautiful descriptions of the country, the winters are colder, the summers hotter and the ground is a little less fertile than originally advertised. But success can be had. It requires a

willingness to do that hard work of transformation and an ability to draw on the strengths and resources of friends and neighbors. Public sector innovators, together with willing partners in the profit and non-profit sectors, have been able to use e-government to move beyond information posting and simple transactions to create more engaged communities.

The way people interact and work with their government is being revolutionized. Every year more people are going online and spending less time in line. Joint ventures between government and the private sector have created new and exciting ways to fund innovation. There is much that remains to be done, but it can and will be done as e-government moves into the next phase of modernization. Enough time has passed and enough has been learned through trial and error to demonstrate that the early descriptions of e-government may have been overly optimistic, but weren't wrong. The way government organizes itself to meet the needs and expectations of those it serves is changing for the better.

The General Motors Corporation recently joined with the National Football League to create a television commercial that says, "Amateurs work until they get it right. Professionals work until they can't get it wrong." This is the time for experienced professionals in government to rekindle the spirit of optimism, once again take up the challenge of transformation and create the next phase of electronic government.

Endnotes

- ¹ The Internet is a critical tool of professional work. For younger professionals and even for those who came of age in the era of punch cards and mainframes, it has been fully integrated into our daily work life. This is an evolving phenomenon. As technology improves and our skills increase, we find that the web and e-mail play a larger and larger role in work and production. See <http://csdl2.computer.org/comp/proceedings/hicss/2003/1874/05/187450146b.pdf>
- ² Center for Digital Government, *2006 Digital States Survey Major Findings*, October 2006.
- ³ Mary Madden, "Internet Penetration and Impact," *Pew Internet and American Life Project*, April 2006.
- ⁴ <http://www.egovbarriers.org/?view=inventory>
- ⁵ Bill Harley is an NPR commentator who lives in the town of Seekonk, the county of Bristol in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. "Life in the Commonwealth," on *All Things Considered*, National Public Radio, Sept. 8, 2006.
- ⁶ Paul W. Taylor and Richard J. H. Varn, *Prove IT: The Disciplines of Harvesting Value from Public Information Technology*, Center for Digital Government, 2005: 13.
- ⁷ Stage model from the Swedish Agency for Administrative Development, from *Characteristics of Public E-services: Investigating the E-diamond Model Accepted to the First International Pragmatic Web Conference*, Sept. 21-23 2006, Stuttgart, Germany. <http://www.vits.org/publikationer/dokument/596.pdf>
- ⁸ <http://www.gartner.com/it/page.jsp?id=497088>
- ⁹ Telephone interview with Mr. Bill Miller, state of Nebraska deputy state court administrator for IT, Oct. 23, 2006.
- ¹⁰ <http://www.gwu.edu/~ibi/minerva/Fall%202004/Brazilian%20e-government.pdf>
- ¹¹ http://www.public-cio.com/story.php?id=Turbo-Charging%20E-Government-99814&story_pg=1
- ¹² Ibid.
- ¹³ http://www.public-cio.com/story.php?id=Turbo-Charging%20E-Government-99814&story_pg=1
- ¹⁴ The phrase "The Long Tail" (as a proper noun with capitalized letters) was first coined by Chris Anderson in a 2004 *Wired Magazine* article to describe certain business and economic models such as Amazon.com or Netflix. The term long tail is also generally used in statistics, often applied in relation to wealth distributions or vocabulary use. See en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Long_Tail. Also, Anderson blogs on the subject at <http://www.thelongtail.com/>
- ¹⁵ Robert Atkinson is president of the Information Technology and Innovation Foundation. http://www.public-cio.com/story.php?id=Turbo-Charging%20E-Government-99814&story_pg=1 and <http://www.earth911.org/master.asp?s=about&a=AboutUs/Earth911/Infolyer2006.html>
- ¹⁶ From an interview with Mr. Sloane Wright, director of marketing for Alabama Interactive, Oct. 26, 2006. Alabama Interactive is a subsidiary of NIC.
- ¹⁷ <http://dmv.utah.gov/images/otsstations.pdf>
- ¹⁸ <http://www.famous-quotes-and-quotations.com/yogi-berra-quotes.html>

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