m-Governance for better G2C service

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Abstract

The paper discusses the strongly emerging domain of m-governance and the impact on Indian society. We have also made an attempt to bring forward the problems limiting the use and growth of m-governance for better service delivery. Also significant contributions made by companies towards the growth of m-governance in India are specified.

Keywords: **banking; e-governance; m-governance; mobile technology;**

Introduction

Transparency, efficiency and accountability are the key mantras of a successful government. M-governance practice is in the initial stages in India and other developing countries, with a lot to be done for its widespread usability enhancing government efficiency and citizen participation. After moving towards e-Governance, now India is expanding m-Governance across the country. E-governance is technology-enabled processes that will help in good governance, better delivery of public services and broader interactions between citizens and government. Constant effort is being made to apply e-Governance in legislature, judiciary, or administration, in order to improve internal efficiency, the delivery of public services, or processes of democratic governance. The primary delivery models are Government-to-Citizen or Government-to-Customer (G2C), Government-to-Business (G2B) and Government-to-Government (G2G) & Government-to-Employees (G2E) (Brown, 2003) (Sharma, 2007). To achieve dreams of digital, mobile and efficient governance, not only computing resources, but infrastructure and energy will also be required. Government fulfills these resource requirements by collaborating with public and private partnership by contracting and outsourcing.

After moving towards e-Governance, now India is expanding m-Governance across the country for better delivery of public services, or processes of democratic governance.

M-Governance

M-governance is part of a broader phenomenon of mobile-enabled development (m-development) or leveraging the mobile revolution to enable development impact using electronic devices and making them available via mobile technology. It extends the benefits of remote delivery of government services and information to those who are unable or unwilling to access public services through the Internet, or who simply prefer to use mobile devices (mgovworld.org, 2010). Mobile phones allow citizens to get access to government services virtually in any place covered by a mobile network at a lower cost as compared to internet services. Even most urban local bodies in India have a poor understanding of and access to the enormous potential that information and

communication technologies (ICT) hold in improving the functioning of these organizations and better services to citizens.

Usage scenario

Indian telecom subscriber base has almost reached the astounding figure of 500 million making mobile phones the most accessible tool of communication available to such a large population enabling the delivery of government services at the doorstep of the citizens. Services relating to health, education, employment, police, tax, judicial and legal systems, election campaign and many more can be easily made available via mobile service. This has immensely improved scope of e-democracy and e-participation, engaging in democratic decision-making through various polls. Possible m-Government Application Areas are (medianama.com,2009):

- Notifications by civic authorities

- Payment of utility bills

- Support to government healthcare and education information campaigns

- General access, submissions of service requests, complaints etc. by the citizens

- Notifications/alerts for payment of taxes

- Broadcasting of critical information regarding traffic condition and other events etc.

- Crisis/Disaster management

Limitations and remedies

M-government has great potential to vastly expand access to public services to the poorest segments of the population in areas where wired telecommunications and ICT services do not exist but it has many limitations and restrictions. Some of the limitations are stated below:

Small size of mobile phone: due to this the characters are small in visibility and limited in words restricting the amount of information access.

Charged SMS: In some areas the SMS charges are high constricting the service of mobile technology.

Rural India: due to low literacy rate, the use of this technology for governance is further reduced.

Payment mode: the billing of mobile usage is usually done through credit cards, bank accounts, customer centre etc. which is unavailable for all mobile users.

Architectural Gaps: the design, functions, features and services of mobile devices have a wide gap in theory and real time usage. Often a mobile 'solution' is designed for a problem that never existed at first.

Security and authentication process for safe-guarding of critical data and ensuring the privacy of information is a subject of concern.

• Scalability and high availability of information on demand needs more effort both at technology and government front.

The government has initiated around 54 gram panchayats in five remote blocks of the state will soon have SMS alerts on disasters, funds inflow and outflow, information about health camps and pulse polio campaigns will be sent to and from between the state departments, district offices and gram panchayats, block development offices [. The state department for panchayats and rural development is seriously working towards setting up Common Service Centre (CSC) at villages at the gram panchayat, block and district levels in order to provide better G2C service at even rural regions of the country. To have more information access via mobile phones, look at mobile devices that combine computing with mobility and are affordable. Another challenge in this area is to develop applications that can be offered in local languages for nation wide users. Door to door mobile billing facility or separate mobile billing centre for rural areas even helping them with its usage for G2C delivery should be set up. An important aspect of the architectural mobile-governance framework to be considered is the capture of existing knowledge about processes and work-flows and its mapping into an abstraction that can be translated into a set of services .

Companies supporting m-governance

While many innovative applications are underway in both private sector as well as government domains for m-governance, it may be a little premature to celebrate its success in India. Bharti Airtel is the first service provider to provide traffic automation solution and has also developed a solution facilitating property tax collection by Chennai Corporation, via BlackBerry. Spice Digital will initially launch 6 services for the government of Himachal Pradesh, and further expand it to 12 services. Among the services being launched by Spice Digital are, on SMS, information pertaining to Vehicle Registration, Driving License, Senior Citizens Identity card, Health Management (medianama.com,2009).

Reliance Communications has bagged contracts to develop telecom infrastructure for m-governance in Kerala, Mumbai and Maharashtra circles (Business Standard.2010). It will help in providing real time police information, updates on land records and civil services through voice, GPRS, Bluetooth, SMS and 3G technologies. Some new applications will also be developed to enable group messaging to facilitate Panchayats (Block Headquarters) and or district level bodies to disseminate information of local importance to rural people (rimweb.in,2010).

Conclusion

Mobile-government can marshal in a approach to delivery of government services to the doorstep of the citizens thus bridging the gap. The primary characteristic of these m-governance solutions should be that of capturing skill levels, services and devices required to offer faster, cost-effective and scalable solutions. Mobile technology usage in governance is empowering the masses and creating awareness at the grassroots thus enabling citizen centric services.

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