

# GOVERNMENT 2.0: NAVIGATING THROUGH THE ONLINE REVOLUTION

A CSC POINT OF VIEW



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GOVERNMENT 2.0 IS A TERM USED TO DESCRIBE THE ADOPTION OF WEB 2.0 PRINCIPLES WITHIN GOVERNMENT TO PROMOTE GREATER PARTICIPATION, EDUCATION AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF CITIZENS IN THE POLITICAL PROCESS.

Government 2.0 is aimed towards a new governing model for a world that is increasingly becoming unpredictable with digital disruptions, and economic and environmental instability. As Joshua Cooper Ramo stated in his book *The Age of the Unthinkable*: "What we need is a framework for the sort of change that fits our world - and that lays a foundation for the widespread personal involvement of millions of people that will make such change useful, durable, and sustainable."<sup>1</sup>

The second generation of the internet (Web 2.0) has created such a foundation. Through the widespread adoption of social media people are getting used to 'open' processes and participation online - creating the ability to bring together millions rapidly. Before launching into the creation of online Government service websites it is important to get a sense of what Government 2.0 is really trying to achieve. The public and private adoption of Web 2.0 principles provides countless lessons learnt in the areas of people, process and technology; it can provide us with a way to guide the journey.

## GOVERNMENT 2.0 FUTURE STATE

Government 2.0 will result in a greater participation by citizens in the policies, decisions and recommendations that are put forward in our political process - local, state and federal. It will enable:

- Improved citizen services, with engaging, flexible and interactive web content
- Proactive information and faster, efficient processes with anywhere, anytime access
- The knowledge and creativity from the public to be heard - The 'Voice of the People'
- Increased transparency and accountability
- Education through greater access to information.

A clear cut definition of Government 2.0 is not as easy to produce. Take Web 2.0 for example. Ask five people what Web 2.0 is and you will get six responses. If you talk to someone in telecommunications they may mention the convergence of the internet with mobile devices, if you talk to someone in IT they may talk about online services in the cloud, a knowledge worker will focus on

collaboration, a marketing executive may focus on the online advertising opportunities now available. There are no right or wrong answers. People simply tend to emphasise different components depending on their passions and their audience. The same situation is occurring with Government 2.0 - and just as can be seen with Web 2.0 it is important to remember that there is no right or wrong answer. Government 2.0 is about change, something that will happen over time, thus rather than focus on the single definition focus on the vision of what we are trying to achieve.

Armed with ability to stay informed and collaborate, our citizens will be empowered to participate. Having 'your say' in Government will stretch beyond a single vote. In pockets the public has already been witnessing early glimpses of our future. The following is a short list of current examples created by Web 2.0:

- The US Patent Office using crowdsourcing with the Peer to Patent pilot project<sup>2</sup>, opening the patent examination process to public participation for the first time.
- SeeClickFix which allows local residents to identify issues in their neighbourhoods<sup>3</sup>

- Binding student elections via e-voting in Austria, a first in May 2009<sup>4</sup>
- Participatory budgeting from Hamburg, allowing citizens to get involved in how money should be spent<sup>5</sup>
- Interactive Video Forum (Live Q&A) with the Office of the Governor - California<sup>6</sup>
- The Public Whip that lets you see all MPs votes on changes to British laws<sup>7</sup>.

## THE DISRUPTER - WEB 2.0!

Web 2.0 is a change in our approach and use of the internet - it is not solely defined by a group of technologies or a group of communication styles. By providing a powerful low cost, network infrastructure, the internet has become an unprecedented tool for transformation. For example, the occasional surfer who only sent emails and searched for information is now the connected tech-savvy, digitally aware surfer who is a content author on blogspot.com, a website designer on myspace.com, a mobile user with facebook on their iPhone and a digital author on YouTube (just to name a few). These digital aware users, young and old, have completely different expectations which in turn set the bar for what they should receive from Government.

2. New York Law School, Peer to Patent, Retrieved 12 August 2009 from <<http://www.peertopatent.org/>>  
3. SeeClickFix, LLC, *SeeClickFix*, Retrieved 13 August 2009 from <<http://www.seeclickfix.com/>>  
4. Daniel Botz - E-Voting.CC, 'Austrian E-Voting system ante portas', *Pan European e-Participation Network*, January 31 2009, Retrieved 12 August from <<http://pep-net.eu/wordpress/?p=296>>  
5. Bengt Feil, 'eParticipatory budgeting 2009 launched in Hamburg', *Pan European e-Participation Network*, June 17

By far the most disruptive expectation is that of speed. From connecting, accessing, collaborating, influencing and validating information, data and people the internet allows users to do things at a far greater pace than they could have before. In Government, and in most large enterprises, speed is often non-existent. There is formal process, structure, and rigor; all that exist for extremely good reasons. However Web 2.0 is a disrupter, it can be thought of as an online revolution and with any revolution comes destabilisation before our new model of operating solidifies. Just like it has in industry it will destabilise existing ideas of 'how we should do things'. Using banking as an example people no longer always need a branch, you can transfer or pay virtually anything while on the move and with peer-to-peer lending models a financial institution isn't your only source for loans<sup>8</sup>.

In a Government 2.0 world it is fair to say that the Australian public has been primed and will expect far beyond the norm.

2009, Retrieved 12 August from <<http://pep-net.eu/wordpress/?p=511>>  
6. State of California - Office of the Governor, *LIVE Q & A: Schwarzenegger Administration, Health Care Experts Hold Interactive Web Discussion*, Retrieved 18 August 2009 from <<http://gov.ca.gov/interact#QandA>>  
7. Public Whip, *The Public Whip: Counting Votes on your behalf*, Retrieved 18 August 2009 from <<http://www.publicwhip.org.uk/>>  
8. CSC, 'Digital Disruptions', *CSC Leading Edge Forum*, 2008.

## MANAGING THE JOURNEY AHEAD

The transformation towards a Government 2.0 model is a journey, of which, there is an indeterminable end. It is critical that during this time we do not get complacent, we should be constantly learning, constantly adapting and most importantly collaborating with our peer nations. If we are to significantly alter the model in which people engage we have to acknowledge that there will be destabilisation of what is considered the 'norm'. Although this may seem daunting, through Web 2.0 adoption there are lessons learnt in the areas of people, process and technology available to us which can help guide the journey.

## PEOPLE

The most important element in our journey of change is people, both in government and citizens.

**Why it matters to government:** Government needs to know the interest of the people for its best success. It needs to utilise local and indigenous knowledge and creativity for public management decision making and government innovations. It needs to empower and educate people, resolve public dispute, enhance legitimacy and compliance and increase accountability and transparency.

**Why it matters to citizens:** Citizens need to be able to better communicate their individual interests, emotions, perceived impact of issues, collective interests and moral and cultural norms (e.g. security, global warming etc)



**Trusting the crown:** A lesson from the enterprise adoption for Web 2.0 is that you should trust and treat your employees as adults – acknowledging that there are different segments with different capabilities and different needs<sup>9</sup>. Government 2.0 model must address all segments with key strategies for all. The most basic segments include: Innovators, early and late adopters, laggards and rejectors. Furthermore participation is highly context dependent.

**Rapid improvements and enhancements:** Most users have come to expect rapid improvements to online services. This is due to the intense competition online which in turn prompts public and private sites to ‘stay ahead’. Within the Government 2.0 space that competition to always enhance and improve online services will not exist prompting traditional website updates every few years or annually in some cases. Users however, will still expect and may disengage with online services that appear outdated. Government 2.0 services should not try to adhere to all the expectations but simply manage them. Prioritise, research best practice, and identify what works and what doesn’t to reduce mistakes.

**Rapid response:** A future state with increased participation from citizens requires change. However with increased engagement comes the need to see results. In the Web 2.0 world users have power. When changes are made that are not appropriate people rapidly rally together and often get results. For instance, a change in data ownership terms and condition made by Facebook in February 2009 was rescinded in just three days after pressure from angry users<sup>10</sup>. Will our councils, state and federal governments be able to respond to new ideas? For citizens there is no greater deterrent to participation than spending time and effort being ‘involved’ to see nothing or receive a delayed response.

**Large cultural change:** Without executive sponsorship it is rare to get enterprise wide adoption of Web 2.0 technologies and practices. Although disperse activities can sometimes thrive participation can remain limited. For success a journey needs to be started intentionally with clear goals and top level sponsorship. There is therefore a need for a clear communication plan for citizen to understand and join the journey towards Government 2.0.

**PROCESS**

**Wisdom of the Crowd:** Wisdom of the Crowd or eparticipation requires a framework within which control can be released. The framework includes:

- **Analysis** – what should be decided upon, why do we need involvement, what is the expected output, how should participation be organised, what could undermine the participation process
- **Planning** – who will be contacted, how, whose participation is essential, who will bear the biggest influence, which technique and process should be chosen for each participation step?
- **Implementation** – execution or delivery of the final solution.

**Managing contribution:** Citizens participation sounds like an easy task but a key lesson learnt with Web 2.0 in enterprises is that majority of the users do not contribute initially and participation will vary depending on the topic. An interesting consideration in the political process will be the impact that more tech-savvy social groups may have on decision making? There is a need for Government 2.0 models to keep in mind and plan for participation inequalities that may arise during the disruptive transition periods.

**TECHNOLOGY**

Although there are many elements of technology at play within a Government 2.0 world one area that requires specific attention is security.

**Security and Privacy:** Most Web 2.0 online social network sites and forums promote author openness. Within a political context showing your support of or affiliation to particular causes or debates can have negative impacts. Just like voting security and privacy will be essential as online statements made can be carried for ever.

**TRUST**

The final element which is at the heart of all the areas is trust. Citizens will need to have trust in the people, in the technology and the processes else the model will not work. It will take a joint effort from all departments to get the dynamic Government 2.0 model correct, a model which will continually evolve.

Break that trust and people will be up in arms.

9. CSC, ‘Harnessing Web 2.0: Enterprise Strategies for Living on the Web’, *CSC Leading Edge Forum*, 2007.  
 10. Brad Stone and Brian Stelter, ‘Facebook Withdraws Changes in Data Use’, *The New York Times*, February 18 2009, Retrieved 14 August 2009 from <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/19/technology/internet/19facebook.html?\_r=1>

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