Towards Customer Centric Government: Strategies for Service Transformation

INTRODUCTION

• We have an ambition of reformed public services which are increasingly personal
• Customer focus – an extension of choice for the customer giving greater control over how they access Government services
• Customer focus also benefits the tax payer in terms of efficiency and value for money.
• Very little if indeed any of this transformation can be achieved without IT
• These ambitions help provide the current momentum to government IT.
• During the Parliamentary recess I was able to tour the country and visit many different places and people. Witnessing real people using IT to access public services.
  o I visited the Eastserve organisation in Manchester. It is local online services for local people, providing them with wireless broadband. And it is driving the regeneration of the communities it serves. There I met a mother. Four years ago her kids were pestering her for a PC. Eastserve helped her get one and to go online. Today, she’s so enthusiastic about the benefits of IT that she’s now lecturing about it at her local college. That’s a life transformed.
  o I’ve been to the Outer Hebrides on the geographic periphery of the country. There I met a crofter and someone who was partially paralysed. The crofter is using IT to meet the demands of new markets. Thanks to adaptive technology the partially paralysed man can now work from home. Thanks to the arrival of broadband he now operates as a schools network administrator supporting every school in the islands. A life and career transformed and a community served.
I was in Kent last week meeting young people. The most avid users of IT and perhaps the most literate. Many told me they found government web sites wordy or clunky, or even clumsy.

Finally, I was in Staffordshire meeting with small businesses. They want online security. The want easily accessible and relevant business information.

- All these are lessons for Government which will be reflected in the IT strategy. There’s a lesson there for Government IT. The services it runs must make a difference to people. Help them deal with their issues, met their deadlines and to feel valued. It only can do that by being customer centric. And, that requires transformation of our public services. That has always been the case with Govt IT. We can and must do more.

OUR AMBITION

- The government is committed to putting the citizen at heart of public services. Not the provider, the producer, the department, the agency or council.

  - We want healthier citizens cared for by a NHS that is “Free to All, Personal to Each”.

  - We want children to learn more by using the information and communication technologies that are embedded as we re-build our schools.

- That future is our ambition and it will only be achieved through a thorough transformation of public sector services.

THE CHALLENGES

- We face four challenges.

- Our ambitions face….The challenge of scale.
• Thanks to the nature of our government - we are not federal like many of the other leading e-government countries - we are the most ambitious in scale - as you will find out from the CIOs speaking later.

• Our ambitions face...The challenge of **efficiency**.

• The public sector is spending about £14bn a year on IT. While IT can generate efficiencies **we must be vigilant that we are not wastefully duplicating infrastructure and applications**. Later today you we will hear from the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, Des Browne, who will give you an update on how the Efficiency Programme is progressing.

• Our ambitions face...The challenge of **delivery**.

• We mean to deliver. We have delivered large change projects.
  o For example, successfully migrating the **payment of benefits direct into the bank accounts** of 22 million citizens

• We have **delivered innovation**.
  o NHS Direct. With one million visitors and 650,000 calls per month it is a world leader.

• But while I celebrate such success **I must also acknowledge delivery problems of the past**.

• **The vast majority of IT systems work**, managed and driven by dedicated public-sector IT professionals.

• I’d like to highlight things we are doing **already** to deliver. **This government is tackling the generic causes** of failure.

• The OGC has done sterling work.
Transferring generic techniques and lessons from better management of public sector construction projects.

- Recognising and developing the skills of our workforce.
- And putting in:
  - Better monitoring
  - Better management of suppliers
  - Controls at a portfolio level
  - Capacity planning

- And the situation is improving - as even the National Audit Office has acknowledged.

- We are doing it because we are serious about efficiency, serious about modernisation and deadly serious about providing better services that change real people’s daily lives.

**Our ambitions face...The challenge of relevancy**

- We live in a world where the old political contract – between a deferential citizen and a paternalistic Government cannot deliver. We want a more grown-up relationship¹.

- We recognise the need for citizens to have both ‘choice’ and ‘voice’, Choice in how they use public services. And a voice in how these services are created around them. **Choice to those whose voice is traditionally not heard in this debate.**

- **Thanks to IT, families, regardless of economic background, will be able to get the same level of service.** And IT can help **dismantles the barriers** put up by producers and geographic environment.

¹ Miliband to Local Government Association, 08/07/05
For example, The Citizens Direct consumer helpline and Web site creates a **common process and single interface** to trading standards offices across the country. A complainant gets service at the best level not just the level afforded locally.

Or consider the process of accessing NHS consultants. The NHS IT reforms will help ensure access to the right help for all who need it. ‘Choose and book’ will put the patient in control not the consultant.

- The truth is command public services today are no more acceptable than a command economy. The 21st century’s expectations in public services are a world away from those of 1945.

- People demand quality, choice, high standards. Why? Because in every other walk of life they demand them. And experience the benefits of them. We have to meet that expectation

**TRANSFORMATION STRATEGY**

- **I am confident that we can meet these four challenges by taking a strategic approach towards transformation.** It is an opportunity to use technology to bridge the gap between where we are now and our ambition for the future.

- How do we…
  - “open up the system
  - **break down its monoliths,**
  - **put the parent and pupil and patient and law-abiding citizen at the centre of it.”**
  - To quote the Prime Minister

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2 Prime Minister to Labour Party Conference 2005
3 As above
Transformation will occur if we...

- First, **centre our services on the customer** - citizens and businesses in our case.
- Secondly, that will be further enabled as we **share services** across the public sector effectively.
- Thirdly, and it will be underpinned by the **professionalism** of the way we conduct our business.

**CITIZEN-CENTRED SERVICES** can only be built by **systematically engaging citizens**, business and the front line of public services. Not treating them as distant downstream consumers of outputs. We need to fixate on the customer’s behaviours, motivations and needs.

Let me stress the importance of gaining such insights.

- Last month I travelled out to an **oil rig** 150km out in the North Sea. To learn how the workers were using IT to get on with their work and lives, even out there.

We need more customer insight that drives action to improve service and to add value. That is our intention for our **Customer Insight Panel**. The panel and other innovative techniques will generate actionable insight. Further detail in our IT strategy published shortly.

As we survey and seek that insight we must always be sure that the results are representative. It is challenging to consult with some groups.

- Market researchers find it hard to reach the young on a land line.
- The old may be reluctant to criticise when asked if it really was a satisfactory experience.

But we must seek their experiences, analyse them and inform our decisions.
• **SHARING SERVICES** also drive transformation.

• Transformation will occur if we take a **new approach to joined-up service delivery** across the public sector - one that will break down the silo culture of delivery.

• It also means building up **more effective links** between central and local government and the wider public sector. Already some district and county councils share **contact centres**, allowing citizen questions to be answered first time on the front line.

**PROFESSIONALISM** runs throughout transformation.

• Too often public sector IT professionals have a series of jobs rather than a career path.

• The quality of our transformation is **dependent** on our empowered **front line staff** ensuring that value is delivered in every call or client meeting. That quality is also dependent on those **behind the scenes**.

• As we build solutions **are we treating the front line workers as customers too?**

• Overall, this focus on professionalism will **increase citizen confidence**
  - In the effectiveness of our services
  - In the security of our services
  - In our ability to improve their real lives.

**A FINAL CHALLENGE**

• I want to finish as I began. By putting the customer first.
PERORATION

- I want to finish as I began. By recalling the real problems or real people out there.

- Today is not the era of the big state; but a strategic one:
  - empowering,
  - enabling,
    - Putting decision making in the hands of people not government
  - That’s our strategy for transformation.

- So, be customer-centric… For the likes of that mother in Manchester…
- Share services… For the likes of those out on the rigs…
- Be more professional… For that administrator in the Hebrides…

- All in all, it is a transformation we can and must deliver.

ENDS

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4 Prime Minister to Labour Party Conference 2005