

Realizing the Potential of the Connected Republic

Web 2.0 Opportunities in the Public Sector

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March 2009



Cisco Internet Business Solutions Group (IBSG)

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Executive Summary

Many innovative public sector organizations are embracing social media to establish new communication channels with citizens and to involve them more in public decisions. There is an opportunity, however, to go further by embracing the key values that underlie Web 2.0: collaboration, transparency, and empowerment.

Modern communication technologies not only make collaboration vastly easier—they also enable new forms of collaboration. Public sector organizations should encourage greater collaboration across teams and organizations, as well as inside them. They should also seek to explore the potential of self-organized, bottom-up collaboration. A less-siloed public sector would have better internal feedback mechanisms, be more open to new ideas, and be better able to deal with change.

Transparency is what enables people to get involved and to contribute. In a world where sharing information is so easy, public agencies should aim to improve citizens' ability to access information, provide feedback, and view the feedback of other citizens. Ultimately, we should move toward a world where the background information, the thinking, and the options for every public sector decision and action are easily available to citizens.

Web 2.0 is about users who are creators as much as consumers. Public sector organizations should embrace an ethic of empowerment and maximize the ability of citizens (and frontline workers) to create public value. In addition to providing new opportunities for citizens to offer input into public decisions, they should explore ways of enabling citizens to co-produce public services—distributed models of public service provision where users of a service are actively involved in shaping the outcomes it delivers.

Adoption of Web 2.0 tools and values has much to offer the public sector. There are challenges and barriers, but it is a route the public sector needs to travel. Not only can it contribute to the efficiency agenda, but it can enable public sector organizations to deliver more innovation and become more agile in the face of unpredictability. Crucially, it can transform the relationship between citizens and public institutions, and between citizens and their representatives.

Introduction

The election of Barack Obama as U.S. president was a dramatic illustration of how a new approach to political campaigning can mobilize unprecedented numbers of people and unleash new sources of funding. The Obama campaign team collected more than 13 million email addresses, sent more than 1 billion email messages, and raised more than \$500 million through 6.5 million online donations—6 million of them involving amounts of \$100 or less. The secret of success lay in empowering the campaign's volunteers and creating a personal link between them and the candidate. Two million people created profiles on the My.BarackObama.com social network, while 5 million supporters campaigned through other social networking and multimedia sites. Furthermore, the relationship was two-way; by the end of the campaign, Obama was tracking the messages of 140,000 people on the Twitter micro-blogging site, while 136,000 people were following his messages.¹

President Obama sought to carry this new approach into government via his Change.gov website during the transition, and then via the official White House website (Whitehouse.gov) after the inauguration. His success highlights the issue of Web 2.0 and the public sector. Is "Government 2.0" an empty label, or will embracing Web 2.0 really deliver change? If so, what sort of transformation will it involve? In this white paper, we point to plenty of evidence that public sector bodies are already using social media successfully. We also argue that the public sector should embrace the values that underlie these tools. We believe Web 2.0 offers exciting opportunities to raise the performance of the public sector and to enhance relationships between citizens and the state. As ever, change will be a difficult process, but the risks of *not* moving toward Government 2.0 outweigh the risks of doing so.

Defining "Web 2.0" is a challenging and not particularly fruitful enterprise.² What this concept reflects, however, is recognition that the Internet (and our relation to it) has entered a new phase. Initially, connectivity was seen primarily as a way to access information and services; now it is about enabling people to come together and do things in new ways. The essence of Web 2.0 is participation. Whether it's Facebook or Wikipedia, Flickr or YouTube—this is a world where users are creators as much as consumers. The power of social media such as blogs, wikis, forums, and social networking sites is that they make it dramatically easier for people to find each other and collaborate.

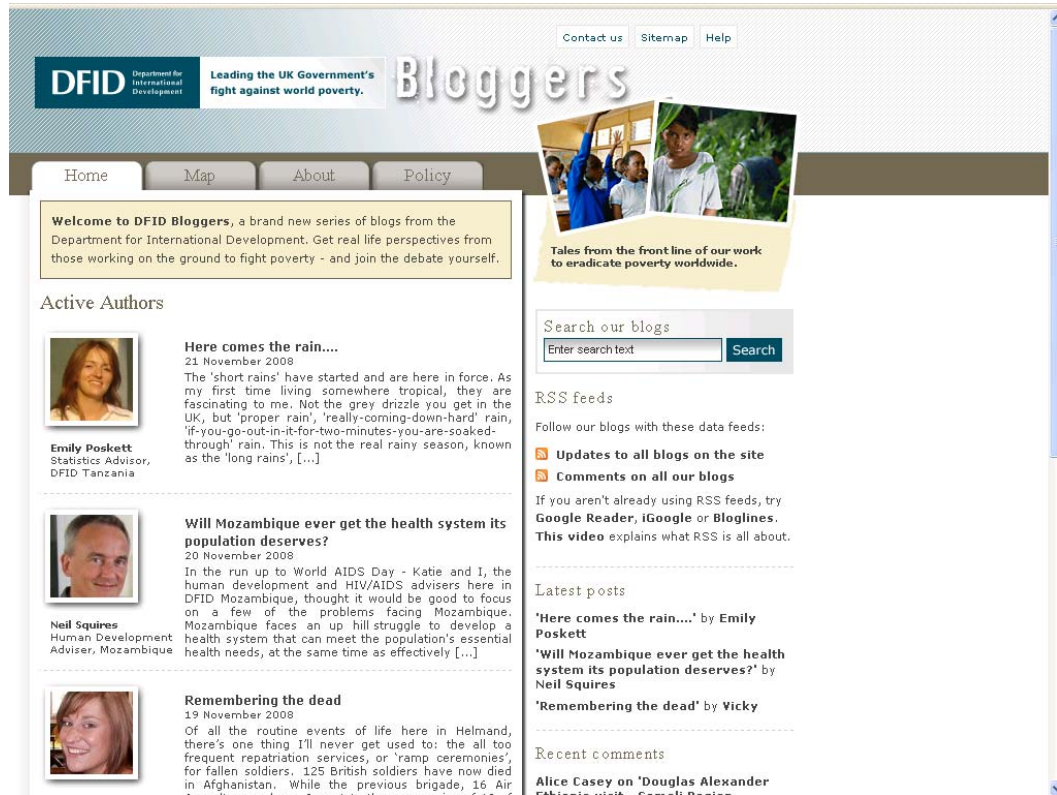
So what does Web 2.0 offer the public sector? One way it can help is by bridging the gulf between citizens and public institutions. Using social media demonstrates that the public sector is committed to engaging with citizens. Furthermore, these tools can help produce more positive relationships by supplementing one-way communication with dialogue, and impersonal pronouncements with more personal interaction.

Social media can also improve service delivery. By making it easier for workers to find information and to find each other, social media can improve collaboration and allow the public sector to tap more effectively into the knowledge and skills of its staff. Embracing such tools can help government organizations attract, retain, and motivate the workers, managers, and leaders they need. Many of these people will have grown up in a Web 2.0 world and will be uncomfortable working in the pre-Web 2.0 working environments that prevail in many public sector organizations.

Exploring New Communication Channels

Plenty of innovative public sector organizations are grasping the opportunities offered by Web 2.0 tools. Many politicians, such as U.K. Foreign Secretary David Miliband,³ Hungarian Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsany,⁴ and Australian Leader of the Opposition Malcolm Turnbull,⁵ have used blogs to build a more personal relationship with citizens. The United Kingdom's Department for International Development has set up a group blog,⁶ written by relatively low-level, frontline staff, as a way of giving citizens real insight into the work of the department and the problems it is trying to tackle. Oakland County, Michigan has set up a website⁷ that combines forums and blogs as a way of encouraging dialogue with and between its citizens.

Figure 1. Department for International Development (U.K.) Blogging Website



Other social media tools are also being adopted. Many public sector organizations are using YouTube to take their message to audiences in a more direct and personal way. For example, the State of California Franchise Tax Board uses a YouTube video to explain tax regulations,⁸ while the U.K. local authority Swansea currently has 46 videos on the site—most showing events in the area, but some promoting the work of the council (e.g., a series on social services).⁹ Others are exploiting the creative potential of this tool. For example, New Zealand's Ministry for the Environment ran a video competition to promote sustainability to young people.¹⁰

Web 2.0 tools such as Twitter are also being used. For example, more than 92,000 people are currently following the daily activities of the U.K. prime minister¹¹ via this service. In addition, more than 60 U.S. politicians and agencies are using Twitter. For example, the State Department tweets country-specific information and travel alerts,¹² the Food and Drug Administration tweets food products that have been deemed unsafe,¹³ while NASA has a Twitter Q&A service plus Twitter feeds for more than two dozen missions.¹⁴

Many universities and schools use Facebook (or other similar sites) as a channel for communicating with students, while bodies such as the Public Health Agency of Canada employ it to disseminate health information.¹⁵ The CIA has used it to help recruit people for its National Clandestine Service,¹⁶ and in Germany, 1,400 civil servants and specialists from industry are discussing next-generation e-government via the business professional social network XING.¹⁷

The public sector has also tested the potential of virtual worlds. The Ontario Government in Canada used Second Life to help inform young people about career opportunities and to attract them to public service. In a 12-week pilot, visitors to this Second Life “island” were able to spend a “day in the life” of employees in five different career tracks. Over the course of the pilot, more than 9,000 visitors spent an average of 20 minutes learning about life in the public service and provided positive feedback.¹⁸ Similarly, Sweden has opened a virtual embassy on Second Life.¹⁹

Figure 2. Swedish Virtual Embassy in Second Life



The avatar of Swedish Foreign Affairs Minister Carl Bildt cuts the ribbon at the inauguration of Sweden's virtual embassy in Second Life.

Enabling People to Contribute in New Ways

These uses of social media mainly involve employing these new channels to convey messages to citizens and to interest them in public sector issues. But Web 2.0 approaches have also been used to give citizens greater voice and influence in public sector decision-making—for example, through e-petitions. These initiatives make it dramatically easier for citizens to make their views known both to each other and to decision-makers. Probably the best-known example is the Number 10 Downing Street e-petitions site,²⁰ where one petition (against road pricing) managed to secure nearly 1.7 million signatures during the 12 months it was on the site.

Web 2.0 can enrich traditional approaches to consultation. In 2007, the New Zealand government used a wiki—a document anyone can edit—to capture public views on what a new Police Act might look like.²¹ Now a similar process is being used by Archives New Zealand in relation to its Digital Continuity Strategy.²² Meanwhile, in the United Kingdom, the Department for Innovation, Universities & Skills built widgets for one of its consultations,²³ enabling individuals and organizations to add the consultation questions (or a subset of them) to their own websites, so people can engage with them in a context of their choice. They also followed up an early consultation with an executive summary that allowed readers to post comments at any point in the text.²⁴

Other public sector institutions have created virtual communities, such as New Zealand's Digital Strategy Forum²⁵ and its "Safe As" road safety forum, to enable sustained interaction between citizens and policymakers.²⁶

Web 2.0 tools can also improve communications within and between public sector organizations. U.S. intelligence agencies have been leaders in this area. First, they created Intellipedia,²⁷ a set of three wikis where intelligence officers from 16 agencies share and securely discuss information. Now they are developing A-Space, a common collaborative workspace for all analysts from the United States Intelligence Community, providing forums, blogs, wikis, search (classified and public Internet sources), web-based email, and collaboration tools.²⁸

A similar example is New Zealand's "e-initiatives" wiki, which replaced an older, static reporting approach to tracking progress of e-government, and provides an environment for public servants to share e-government experiences. This wiki has done a great job in pooling information (it covers more than 530 projects from 93 government organizations), but it has had less success in getting agencies to acknowledge and share their mistakes. Interestingly, these criticisms of the project were made on a blog by a public official and, of course, provoked a discussion about how to avoid such problems in the future.²⁹

These examples highlight a previously unmet need and willingness to share. In the United Kingdom, nearly 15,000 people joined the U.K. Civil Service Facebook group, which is open only to people with a .gov.uk email address. Similarly, more than 400 museum professionals around the world share ideas and experiences via a Facebook group.³⁰ Other social networks are built around specially created tools, such as New Zealand's Principals Electronic Network, an online community where school leaders can discuss issues and share experiences in a secure environment created by the Ministry of Education.³¹

Blogs can also play a role. Since 2006, the many U.S. federal agencies and programs involved in combating HIV/AIDS have built a community around the AIDS.gov blog.³² The New Zealand State Services Commission has two blogs (In Development³³ and Research e-Labs³⁴) that are viewable by anyone, but are primarily intended to share ideas within government. Conversely, the United Kingdom's Department for Innovation, Universities & Skills is using customized Netvibes pages as dashboards to keep policymakers in touch with references on blogs or elsewhere on the Internet.³⁵

Figure 3. Department for Innovation, Universities & Skills Dashboard (U.K.)

The screenshot displays the 'DIUS Communications Dashboard' with a dark blue header. Below the header, there are several sections:

- Dashboard (101)**: A search bar with 'Google Custom Search' and a 'Search' button.
- (17) DIUS Family search**: A section for searching DIUS family members.
- (17) Mentions of DIUS & Ministers**: A list of news items with timestamps, such as 'Labour's real identity crisis - guardian.co.uk - 22 hours ago' and 'Poll predicts wipe-out for Labour in South-East - This is London - 23 minutes ago'.
- (17) Speeches, Consultations and Press Notices from**: A list of updates, including 'Improvement in the Further Education Sector - A consultative prospectus for a new sector-owned organisation - 4 months ago' and 'Innovation - share your ideas with us! - 2 months ago'.
- (14) DIUS Family stakeholder**: A list of stakeholder updates, such as 'Call for nominations to STFC's Particle Physics Grants Panel (Theory) - 2 days ago' and 'Learn something new and beat the September blues - September 2008 - 4 days ago'.
- Uploads from DIUSGOV.UK**: A grid of images showing various events and people.
- (19) Blogs mentions: DIUS stakeholders**: A list of blog mentions, including 'Why Eric Ringmar is wrong... - 2 weeks ago' and 'An open letter to a public institution - 3 days ago'.
- (14) External stakeholder news**: A section for external stakeholder news.

Embracing More Radical Change

The previous examples may not seem transformational, but even small changes help move the public sector in new directions. A YouTube video or a minister's blog may seem little different from a speech or press statement; a Netvibes dashboard may seem just an update of the traditional press-clipping service; but even these initiatives contain the seeds of change. Adopting social media involves reaching out to people rather than expecting them to come to you. Furthermore, these tools are inherently two-way. If you put your message on YouTube, you can turn off comments, but you cannot prevent parodies or other forms of feedback. You may not originally have intended to start a dialogue, but if you want to have an impact, you are likely to find it increasingly difficult not to get drawn into a conversation. Similarly, trawling the Internet for comments on blogs and in discussion groups is not like scanning the newspapers—it opens up decision-makers to new voices, saying different things in different tones.

Table 1. How the World Looks Different from a Web 2.0 Perspective

World 1.0	World 2.0
Knowledge sharing and learning are imposed, additional work	Knowledge sharing and social learning are welcome, natural parts of everyday work
Work takes places behind closed doors	Work takes place transparently where everyone can see it
IT tools are imposed on people	People select the tools that work best for them
People are controlled out of fear they will do wrong	People are given freedom in return for accepting responsibility
Information is centralized, protected, and controlled	Information is distributed freely, in an uncontrolled manner
Publishing is centrally controlled	Anyone can publish what they want
Context is stripped from information	Context is retained in the form of stories
People think quietly alone	People think out loud together
People tend to write in the third person, in a professional voice	People write in the first person, in their own voice
People, especially those in authority, are closed to new ideas and new ways of working	Everyone is open to new ideas
Information is pushed to people whether they have asked for it or not	People decide on the information they need and subscribe to it
The world is seen through a Newtonian cause-and-effect model	The world is recognized as complex, with different approaches required

Knowledge Management Consultant David Gurteen's view of the change to "World 2.0" (see <http://www.gurteen.com/gurteen/gurteen.nsf/id/world2.0>).

These points suggest that embracing Web 2.0 could be part of a deeper transformation process, particularly if the public sector adopts the values underlying Web 2.0. Three values are particularly relevant:

- Collaboration
- Transparency
- Empowerment

These values highlight potential directions for changes in government. The duties and responsibilities of the public sector have tended to produce hierarchical, stove-piped organizations, so there would seem to be plenty of opportunity for user-led collaboration to release previously untapped expertise and enthusiasm. Similarly, while there are good reasons for the public sector traditionally wanting to control the release of even nonpersonal information, the opportunities of a connected world justify taking a new look at more open

forms of government. Finally, while the notion of democracy implies active citizenship, dependency is an all-too-common consequence of the bureaucratic state. The promise of Web 2.0 is the possibility of using connectivity to refashion the state in a way that empowers citizens and puts them more in control. To explore this possibility, let's consider each of the values we have highlighted.

Collaboration

In his book *Here Comes Everybody*,³⁶ U.S. Internet commentator Clay Shirky explores the dynamics of the connected world. He highlights how the web has transformed our ability to form groups and argues that in many contexts, self-organizing groups can outperform traditional organizations. Wikipedia and the Linux operating system are the most obvious examples of this kind of group activity, but the outputs do not have to be so striking. More representative examples of self-organization in action are groups like the photographers on Flickr, who are exploring and expanding the art/science of high dynamic range photography,³⁷ or the handful of Andrei Tarkovsky fans who have jointly written a book on the great Russian film director, enabled a film about him to be released worldwide, and sustained numerous other events and publications about him around the world.³⁸

Conventional organizations need to incentivize behavior through extrinsic rewards or punishment, and they devote significant resources to managing coordination through rigorous definition of roles and responsibilities. By contrast, self-organizing groups have a volunteer ethos and let everyone contribute what they can, with privileged roles assigned on a consensus or transparent meritocratic basis. Because they tap into a shared interest (and through this, a shared identity), they have more highly motivated members than conventional organizations. They also are more agile and innovative because the costs of coordination and the costs of failure are vastly lower.

Against this background, public sector organizations appear as the most organized of organizations; even more than in the private sector, control and rigorous processes for accountability are vitally important. This suggests public sector organizations will find it hardest to move toward Web 2.0-style collaboration, but it also means they have the most to gain from it. Tight definitions of roles and responsibilities are good at delivering consistent processes and predictable results, but this comes at a price. Each individual, team, and organization is allowed to contribute only in limited, preset ways, resulting in many potential sources of value being lost and having a draining impact on motivation. Strongly hierarchical organizations also are less effective at innovating and have difficulty dealing with complex, rapidly changing problems.

The possibilities for peer-to-peer collaboration in the public sector are almost limitless. In the central government context, this might mean creating platforms that allow individuals to share information and ideas across different teams and departments. Or it could mean connecting similarly tasked staff in different organizations. In fact, there already are real-life examples of this happening. The *rightsnet* website provides a platform for offering welfare advice to U.K. citizens; it's a place where people can discuss issues, raise questions, and share resources such as leaflets and fact sheets, regardless of whether they work for a central government department, a local authority, a charity, or a private-sector organization.³⁹

The Spanish region of Catalonia took a similar step in 2005 when it made available a set of Web 2.0 tools (wikis, blogs, forums, and more) to all professional groups (lawyers, youth

workers, doctors, and so forth) that interact with the authority.⁴⁰ This has encouraged much more cross-organizational contact among different groups. It has worked best where groups meet face-to-face as well as online, but this self-organized collaboration is playing a significant role in breaking down organizational barriers.

Sometimes it is the practitioners themselves who embrace the opportunities of self-organization. In the United Kingdom, one enterprising government IT professional thought it would be good to bring together all those working on helping Whitehall adjust to the web. Through his efforts, the UKGovWeb Barcamp⁴¹ was launched—a one-day event, now in its second year, that brings together a passionate community of public, private and third-sector workers committed to web-based innovation in government. The community has weekly informal meetings and has sparked a wide range of virtual collaborations and conversations. Another similar example is the U.K. youth work online community that was launched through one person's enthusiasm and now involves more than 200 frontline youth workers in a range of collaborative activities.⁴²

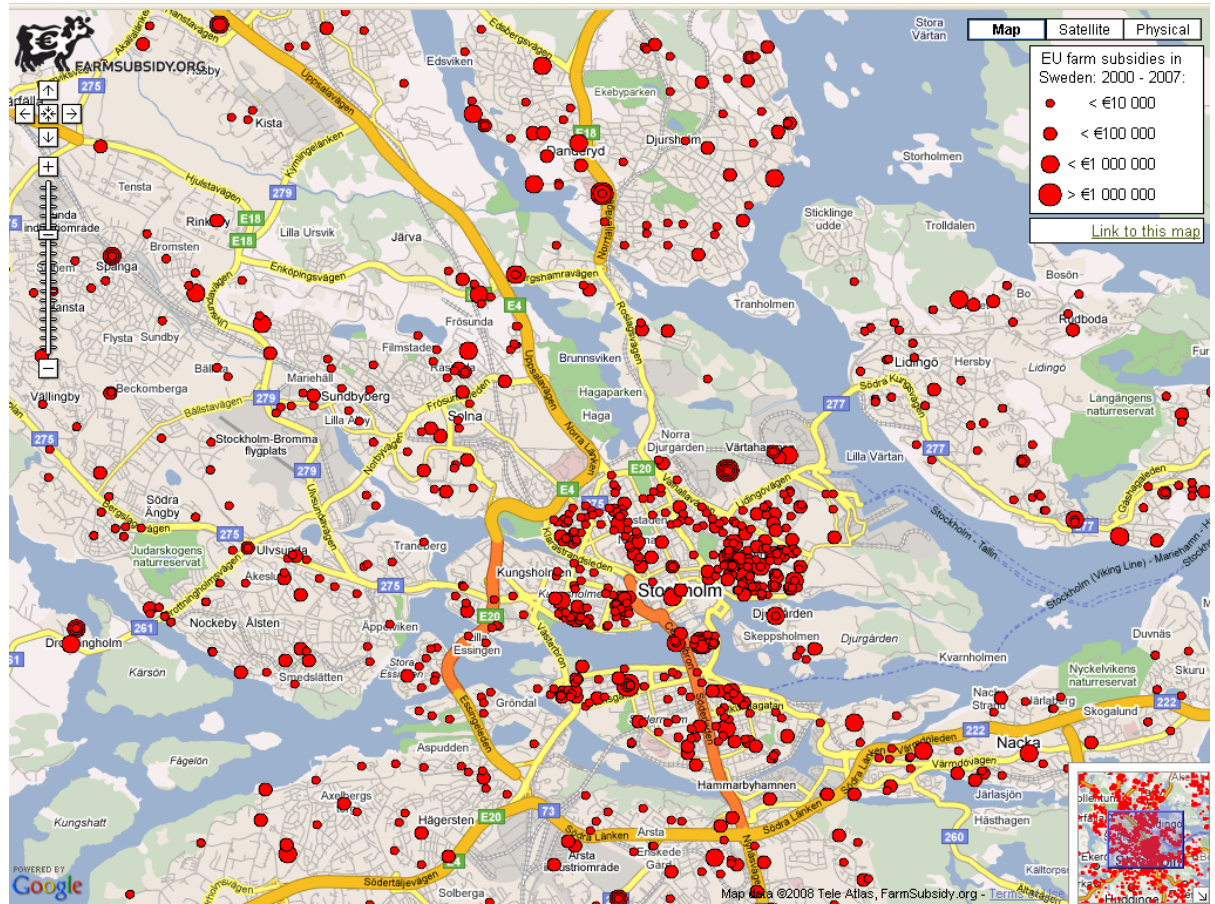
Encouraging new types of collaboration should be an important priority for the public sector. No one would deny the importance of due process and accountability, but given the opportunities of modern communication technologies, the emphasis should be on sharing more information within and among organizations, and on encouraging greater collaboration across teams and organizations as well as inside them. A less-siloed public sector would have better internal feedback mechanisms, be more open to new ideas, and be better able to deal with change. Achieving this will be a significant management challenge. Creating a new balance between command and control and frontline empowerment will be a long and difficult process, but it is hard to deny that it needs to be explored.

Transparency

The second Web 2.0 value that could drive change in government is transparency. This is an area where there is strong external pressure for change. Sites such as TheyWorkForYou (U.K.),⁴³ OMB Watch (U.S.),⁴⁴ and Sunlight Foundation⁴⁵ demonstrate the public's thirst for user-friendly information about the actions of official bodies and elected representatives. Furthermore, these sites illustrate that it is often citizens themselves who are best placed to create the sites and tools that make public information come alive.

Generating citizen and media interest in the European Union's complicated agricultural subsidy program might seem an impossible task, but through its use of mashups that literally put the subsidies on the map, a small group of unpaid volunteers has succeeded in highlighting many unexpected aspects of the program. For example, it is interesting to see how many subsidy recipients in a country such as Sweden live in towns (and, in particular, the capital of Stockholm) rather than in the countryside.

Figure 4. Farmsubsidy.org Mashup (Sweden)



A mashup created by a volunteer group, [farmsubsidy.org](http://maps.farmsubsidy.org) shows recipients of EU Common Agricultural Policy subsidies who live in the area around the Swedish capital of Stockholm. (see <http://maps.farmsubsidy.org/sweden>).

Sites where citizens have made imaginative use of official data highlight the loss of social and economic value when government-held data either is not made available at all, or is made available in unimaginative or restricted ways. The U.K. government sought to tackle this issue by setting up a taskforce whose aim was to tackle the barriers that prevent society from maximizing the value of public data.⁴⁶ As part of its work, the Power of Information Taskforce ran a competition where citizens were invited to submit ideas on how they would use public data if it were available.⁴⁷ Despite offering only a tiny financial prize, the competition generated hundreds of entries, with winners ranging from a mashup that would show the location of every postbox in the United Kingdom, to a site where citizens could input a postcode and see a map showing details of all recycling facilities in that area. Other inventive suggestions included a roadworks API (application programming interface) that would make this information available in a way that a wide range of organizations might adopt, and a site for cyclists that would combine official information and user-generated input about the ease and interest of different cycle routes.

A similar and equally successful competition called “Apps for Democracy” was run by the District of Columbia, inviting technologists to come up with the most interesting applications that use the open data feeds contained in D.C.’s data.⁴⁸

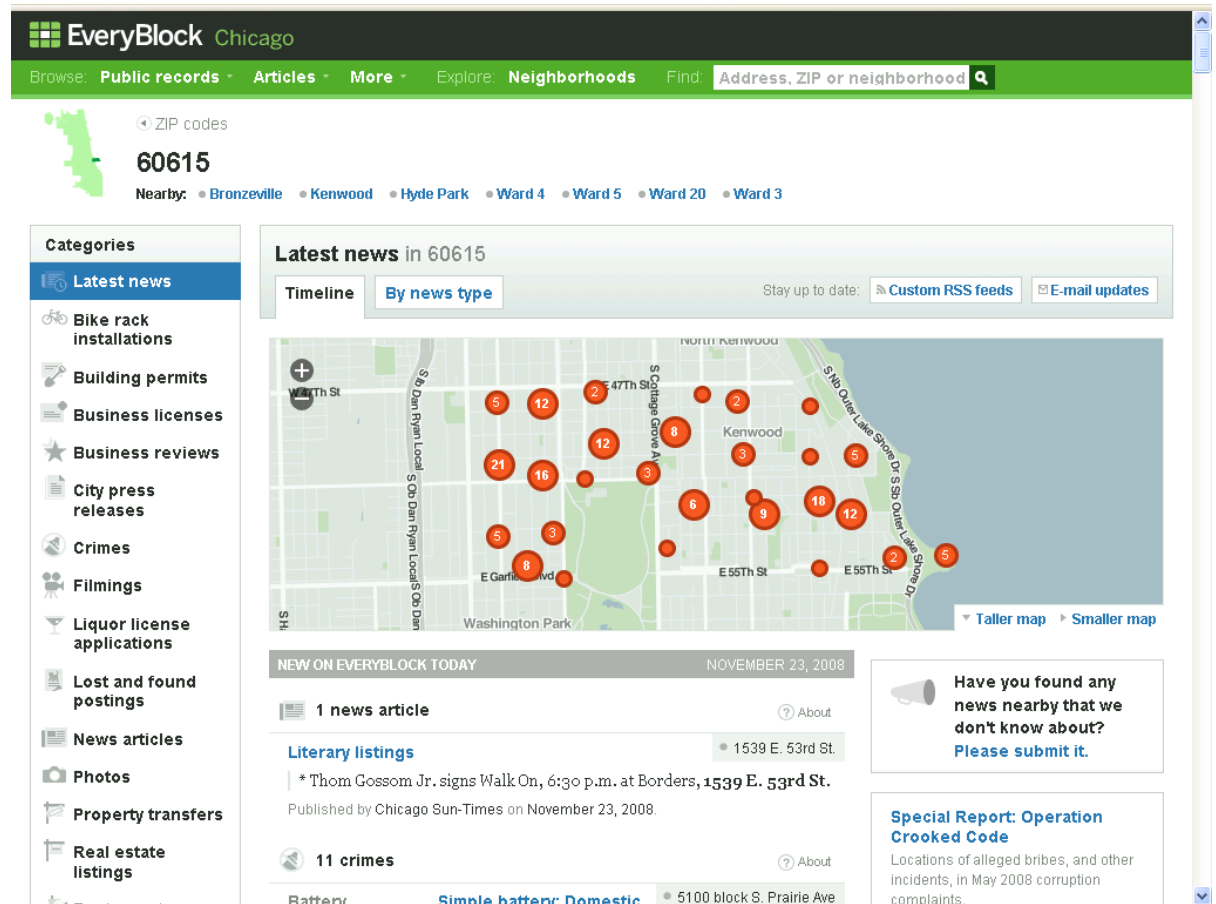
Transparency offers myriad benefits. Some of these relate to efficiency as information about performance and the availability of public sector resources becomes more freely available. An obvious example is travel-related information, and many cities already are exploring innovative ways of making such information easily and conveniently available to citizens. These initiatives not only save people time—they also secure better use of public assets such as roads, buses, and trains.

Technological advances have made it much easier to make all kinds of information available. Getting a busy tone when trying to book a doctor’s appointment is a common experience in many countries; why not publish information on hourly call volumes, thereby encouraging people to call at less-busy times? Why not share information on how long passport renewals take at different times of the year, so more people are likely to pick a good time to renew? As these examples suggest, greater transparency can contribute to citizen convenience and efficiency in almost any administrative process affected by marked variations in demand or ability to supply.

Transparency can also provide a strong impetus for improved performance. Publication of information on how long each stage of an administrative process takes would offer a strong incentive for tackling bottlenecks and dealing with large variances in performance among different administrative offices. Of course, moving in this direction will be an uncomfortable process, and the raw data might sometimes be misleading or unfair. But the answer must surely be to explain the data and seek to justify any performance that looks bad but actually is not. The reality for all organizations is that there are many things that could and perhaps should be fixed, but are not addressed because they are difficult to do or because they never become a priority. Transparency can help give added urgency to issues that are impacting citizens and help drive real change. A dramatic example is the city of Seoul, South Korea, which used the web’s ability to provide transparency as a major part of its campaign to eliminate corruption in government.

In addition to helping improve performance, transparency can contribute to a better relationship and greater trust between citizens and public institutions. Much of people’s cynicism about public sector processes and decisions reflects a lack of understanding about how these things work. When traffic lights are out for three weeks, causing large traffic jams, the natural reaction is to assume that those in charge have not given much thought to the impact of not repairing the traffic lights more quickly. Maybe there was a good reason—perhaps repairing them more quickly was impossible or would have cost three times as much. This is a relatively trivial example, but the point is that in a connected world, making much more information of this kind available is not expensive or difficult, and can clearly have a huge impact on how citizens feel about public sector organizations and public sector decision-makers. Ideally, this could be linked to efforts to bring people together through online communities, as is happening in Chicago through its citizen-led EveryBlock initiative (see Figure 5).

Figure 5. EveryBlock Redefines the Concept of “Local News”



EveryBlock is a site that filters an assortment of local news by location, so citizens get all kinds of information about what is going on in their block (see <http://www.everyblock.com/>).

Transparency naturally leads to dialogue. This can help the public sector better understand what citizens want, but it also helps citizens understand the constraints and choices that public sector leaders face. One example of a local authority engaging in this type of exercise is the London borough of Redbridge, which held a 10-week dialogue with residents about the authority's capital program funding. The Redbridge Conversation focused on improvements citizens wanted to see in the borough and how to pay for them. “You Choose” allowed residents to select investment and funding options, and to balance the budget online. Moderated forums and an email service enabled residents to discuss options and ask questions. More than 3,200 people completed the process online (plus there were 1,900 paper returns). The aim of the initiative was not direct democracy, but to open up the council's budget process and enable citizens to engage in a dialogue with the council about what should happen. Ultimately, the decisions were still made by the councillors, but they were more informed about what residents wanted, while residents learned more about the difficult choices the councillors faced.

This kind of engagement shows the way forward. In a world where sharing information has become vastly easier, public agencies should aim to make as much information as possible available, and then enable citizens to give feedback and see the feedback of others.

Transparency about what others are saying to a public sector organization is important, both because other citizens can qualify the comments of others (agreeing or disagreeing with them), and because this enables discussion among citizens, thus providing a clearer picture of what citizens really think.

Ultimately, we should move toward a world where the background information, the thinking, and the options for every public sector decision and action are easily accessible to citizens. Furthermore, we need to aim for a world where, in every interaction with the public sector, citizens have the option of giving feedback. Undoubtedly, we have much to learn about how to provide information and feedback opportunities in ways that will encourage citizens' participation. But if we want citizens who support and engage with public sector institutions, this is the direction in which we need to go.

Empowerment

Web 2.0 is about active participants and people doing things for themselves. In the public sector context, this suggests a new emphasis on empowering employees, citizens, and communities. The traditional e-government agenda of online services can make public sector transactions more convenient and less time-consuming for citizens, but more radical change would involve enabling citizens to co-produce public services.

A simple example is the FixMyStreet website,⁴⁹ created by the U.K. charity mySociety. This site enables people to highlight problems on their street (such as abandoned cars, potholes, broken streetlights, litter). The information (which often includes a photo) is passed on automatically to the relevant local authority, and citizens (or the local authority) can update the entry when the problem is fixed. So far, more than 25,000 problems have been reported, with new reports currently running at just below 600 a week (with more than 25 percent later being reported as fixed).

The FixMyStreet site contains some information on the extent to which different councils are fixing problems, but potentially it could form the basis of much greater citizen involvement in determining the priority given to different types of problems and the resources set aside to deal with them. Almost any kind of government program that involves inspection and identification of problems would be a candidate for the kind of citizen participation encouraged by FixMyStreet.

This is one way citizens can contribute, but there are many other approaches public sector organizations can take to tap into the willingness of citizens to become involved. mySociety is again a good source of examples. When it wanted to match the video recordings of House of Commons debates to the Hansard record of those debates, it created a simple tool that lets volunteers do just that. Similarly, when it wanted to build up the database for its Groups Near You site, it created a simple game to allow volunteers to vet descriptions of possible groups and pinpoint their location on a Google Map (so far, more than 2,000 of 5,000 potential groups have been sorted or mapped).

In France, when the department of Manche wanted to celebrate its region and attract more visitors, it created a wiki that allowed the area's inhabitants to say what is good about it. Today, WikiManche⁵⁰ has nearly 3,000 articles, covering everything from local recipes to famous people who have lived in or visited the area.

Empowerment also means handing over control to citizens. One form this can take is client-held budgets, as in the U.K. In Control project.⁵¹ This approach has been used by various local authorities to allow social care clients to purchase directly the support they believe they need. Usually, if someone is eligible for local authority funding, social workers devise a care plan that allocates the individual to services that are paid for and commissioned by the local authority. It is rare for the individual to have much of a say in how services are designed. By contrast, self-directed services put the person at the center. Professionals help an individual assess his or her eligibility, and the person is then given an approximate budget to design services that make the most sense. Once the plan is approved by the authority, the money flows to the individual and on to the service providers of his or her choice.

U.K. writer and thinker Charles Leadbeater argues that this approach could be used much more widely.⁵² Personal budgets could be made available to expectant mothers to commission their own maternity services, and to families caring for someone with a long-term health condition that includes significant social care, such as Alzheimer's disease or diabetes. Self-directed services could also work for people with mental health conditions, for the rehabilitation of ex-offenders and drug dependents, and for job seekers who need tailored programs to move off incapacity benefit.

Another form of empowerment is participatory budgeting (PB), where communities decide how public money is spent. The first such initiative was implemented in 1989 in Porto Alegre, Brazil, and it is estimated that there are now well over 1,200 schemes worldwide.⁵³ A good example is the PB process of Belo Horizonte, the capital of the Brazilian state of Minas Gerais. Every two years, a series of assemblies is held, enabling citizens to allocate a budget of US\$43 million and to scrutinize spending. In the first stage of the process, neighborhood representatives call community meetings to establish the priorities for public works in their area. The administration assesses the technical feasibility of each demand and presents each subdistrict with a budget, which is proportional to its population size and inversely proportional to its quality-of-life index.

The subdistrict forums then select a maximum of 25 public works for each district, and subdistrict delegates visit the sites of the works to understand the projects better. Based on the administration's cost estimates and on community-determined priorities, subdistrict delegates choose a maximum of 14 public works. They also elect the district delegates who will oversee execution of the works. The final stage is the Municipal Meeting on Budgetary Priorities, where elected delegates present to the mayor the public works selected by the PB to be executed by the administration.⁵⁴

Empowerment can also mean encouraging community self-help. An interesting example is the Active Circle Project in the London borough of Southwark. Instead of focusing on an unmet need for public services, this project explored how a locality might mobilize public, private, voluntary, and community resources to help older people define and create quality of life and well-being for themselves. This involved a radical change in the way resources were defined (not just financial resources, but other assets such as skills and networks) and the way services were configured (away from a near-exclusive focus on care and toward building relationships and participation). Following two months of user research, Participle—the consultancy firm leading this initiative—is in the process of setting up a cooperative social enterprise that will help people build social relationships and provide services to each

other—some on a paid-for basis, others voluntary. The cooperative will also source some services externally.⁵⁵

Conclusion

Moving toward Government 2.0 will not be easy. Innovation is a voyage of discovery, and we certainly have much to learn. Nonetheless, if we want to build a society where citizens feel closer to their public institutions and more in control of public affairs, these are the kinds of directions we need to explore. We need to build a model of government that is more in tune with our connected world.

The sort of changes we have described should not be seen as an alternative to other efforts aimed at improving the public sector. On the contrary, the two should be viewed as being complementary. While the three values we have highlighted are not exclusively about efficiency and effectiveness, each can contribute to this agenda. The new collaborative tools we discussed can motivate staff and help public sector organizations tap previously untouched sources of value. Transparency can help incentivize action on performance, while the feedback it generates can help ensure resources are targeted on what citizens are really concerned about. Finally, empowerment involves citizens doing more for themselves; such a move away from a dependency culture can help tackle the problem of never-ending demand for certain public services.

In our view, adoption of Web 2.0 tools and values has much to offer the public sector. There are challenges and barriers, but we believe it is a route the public sector needs to travel. Not only can it contribute to the efficiency agenda, but it can enable public sector organizations to deliver more innovation and become agile in the face of unpredictability. Crucially, it can transform the relationship between citizens and public institutions, and between citizens and their representatives. In a democracy, it is vital that people have confidence in the way public affairs are organized. Government 2.0 is about using the power of the network to achieve this objective.

Endnotes

1. See http://voices.washingtonpost.com/the-trail/2008/11/20/obama_raised_half_a_billion_on.html and <http://www.barack20.com/>
2. For some useful pointers, see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Web_2.0 and the Tim O'Reilly article that helped shape thinking about Web 2.0: <http://www.oreillynet.com/pub/a/oreilly/tim/news/2005/09/30/what-is-web-2.0.html>
3. <https://blogs.fco.gov.uk/roller/miliband/>
4. <http://www.kapcsolat.hu/blog/gyurcsany>
5. <http://www.malcolmturnbull.com.au/Pages/Headlines.aspx?SectionID=3>
6. <http://blogs.dfid.gov.uk/>
7. <http://community.oakgov.com/>
8. <http://www.youtube.com/FranchiseTaxBoard>
9. <http://uk.youtube.com/watch?v=9AnSO7liCsY>
10. <http://www.sustainability.govt.nz/upload-videos>. For an example of an entry, see http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t45caU_W9xo
11. <http://twitter.com/DowningStreet>
12. <http://twitter.com/CSIState>
13. <http://twitter.com/foodrecalls>
14. <http://twitter.com/nasa>
15. <http://www.new.facebook.com/pages/Public-Health-Agency-of-Canada/10860597051>
16. For a discussion see <http://www.wired.com/techbiz/it/news/2007/01/72545>
17. https://www.xing.com/net/e_government
18. For more information, see the YouTube video at <http://uk.youtube.com/watch?v=xRc8vQncFG0>
19. http://www.sweden.se/templates/cs/Article_16345.aspx
20. <http://petitions.number10.gov.uk/>
21. <http://www.policeact.govt.nz/wiki/pmwiki.php/Main/HomePage>
22. <http://continuum.archives.govt.nz/digital-continuity-strategy.html#wiki>
23. <http://interactive.dius.gov.uk/scienceandsociety/site/>
24. <http://interactive.dius.gov.uk/innovationnation/>
25. <http://www.digitalstrategy.govt.nz/Resources/Digital-Strategy-Forum/Discussion-Forum/>
26. <http://www.safeas.govt.nz/smf/>
27. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Intellipedia>
28. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/US_intelligence_community_A-Space
29. <http://blog.e.govt.nz/index.php/2008/11/06/sharing-lessons-learnt-on-government-ict-projects-and-the-use-of-web-2.0/>
30. <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=2435702276>
31. One interesting issue is who should run such sites. For example, the United Kingdom has an official networking/discussion site for school governors at <http://www.governornet.co.uk/>, but there is also a similar governor-run site at <http://forums.ukgovernors.org.uk/>
32. <http://blog.aids.gov/>
33. <http://blog.e.govt.nz/>
34. <http://research.elabs.govt.nz/>
35. The DIUS approach is described in detail at <http://sandbox.dius.gov.uk/resources/dashboards.pdf>

36. *Here Comes Everybody: The Power of Organizing without Organizations* by Clay Shirky. See his book-related blog at <http://www.herecomeseverybody.org/>
37. See <http://www.flickr.com/groups/hdr/pool/>
38. See <http://www.ucalgary.ca/~tstronds/nostalghia.com/index.html>, <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=8176083564#/group.php?gid=22679591937>, and <http://www.blackdogonline.com/all-books/tarkovsky.html>
39. <http://www.rightsnet.org.uk/>
40. <http://ecatalunya.gencat.net/portal/index.jsp>
41. See <http://groups.google.co.uk/group/BarcampUKGovweb/> and <http://barcamp.org/BarcampUKGovweb09>
42. <http://ukyouthonline.ning.com/>
43. <http://www.theyworkforyou.com/>
44. <http://www.ombwatch.org/>
45. <http://www.sunlightfoundation.com/>
46. <http://powerofinformation.wordpress.com/>
47. <http://www.showusabetterway.co.uk/call/>
48. <http://www.appsfordemocracy.org/>
49. <http://www.fixmystreet.com/>
50. <http://www.wikimanche.fr/Accueil>
51. <http://www.in-control.org.uk/site/INCO/Templates/Home.aspx?pageid=1&cc=GB>
52. <http://www.demos.co.uk/publications/makingitpersonal>
53. See <http://edc.unige.ch/edcadmin/images/Tiago.pdf>
54. For a Brazilian language site on the project, see <http://opdigital.pbh.gov.br/>
55. <http://www.participle.net/projects/view/5/101/>

More Information

The Cisco Internet Business Solutions Group (IBSG), the global strategic consulting arm of Cisco, helps CXOs and public sector leaders transform their organizations—first by designing innovative business processes, and then by integrating advanced technologies into visionary roadmaps that address key CXO concerns.

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