

Five ways tech can enhance government services

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Latest-generation enterprise technologies have the potential to improve financial and operational management within public sector entities, and enhance service delivery to citizens.



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Let's look at five of the most important applications of technology in Government:

1. Transforming, simplifying and building responsive systems

The first step on the journey to true e-Government services is to replace all of the legacy infrastructure that's unable to keep pace with new technology and new demands. By simplifying and standardising on certain technology sets, government is able to create operational efficiencies and more easily fulfill its various mandates.

We're seeing the first positive signs that the long-awaited Integrated Financial Management System (IFMS) will soon become a reality – as Treasury has recently concluded an agreement with Oracle, to centralise financial management systems across national, provincial and local structures.

Cloud computing is heralded as a key enabler of e-Government transformation. Contrary to popular misconceptions, the cloud is very relevant to state organisations looking to rapidly scale services and deliver them to millions. Government's cloud concerns lie in the area of data sovereignty – meaning that it's essential for cloud services to be hosted locally.

2. Digitalising processes

Our government is under huge strain in a number of areas. And while technology cannot solve every problem, it can assist in speeding up processes for many government services. Take the example of title deeds in South African townships for example. Many residents and homeowners have to wait months or years to apply for official title deeds. In this time, they're unable to raise financing against this asset.

In a country where access to finance is a clear barrier to economic advancement, finding ways to process millions of title deed requests is a primary concern for government. By using Geographic Information Systems (GIS), and fully-digitalising the process, technology is able to shoulder much of the administrative burden, and speed up processing cycle.

In fact, there are numerous examples where geolocation technology like GIS, combined with intelligent digital processes, can assist with local administration – most notably in areas such as improving the collection of municipal rates and enforcing municipal by-laws, for instance.

3. Developing skills

Much has been written about the dearth of key skills in the public sector. But with the right technology we can go a long way in addressing the labour shortage, improving efficiencies and stimulating economic growth.

By moving towards cloud-based architectures, government is able to reduce the need for certain specialist skills (for those ‘scarce skills’ where competing in the open market with more attractive private sector employers is an impossible task).

Secondly, new online and mobile learning tools give government employees access to a far greater breadth of learning materials. And thirdly, technology-enabled partnerships with schools, technikons and universities can further improve public servants’ access to skills development.

4. Advanced analytics

One of our country’s biggest challenges is the relatively small pool of taxpayers in comparison to the vast range of infrastructure and services that government must provide, maintain, and enhance.

To create much-needed efficiencies, and get the most from every tax-dollar, we can turn to advanced analytics. For example, sensor-enabled predictive maintenance helps to pre-empt faults on electricity lines or water pipes, speeding up the time to resolution and decreasing the costs of maintenance.

As we remain firmly in the grip of one of the most devastating droughts in recent history, the issue of more efficiently managing our scarce resources is brought to the fore. Advanced analytics would enable us to make better use of these resources, and improve Government’s ability to embark on new infrastructure developments.

5. Enterprise development

By selecting technology partners who have a strong focus on enterprise development, Government’s ICT investments can be leveraged to have a far broader impact on economic growth.

Large IT specialists should be developing innovation hubs, skills development programmes, and involving them in private-sector contracts. When all of these pieces fall into place, the country receives maximum value from Government’s technology partnerships.

Taking this one step further, we believe that the role of ICT service providers goes far beyond simply licensing and

integrating technology. True partnerships involve walking hand-in-hand with Government, alleviating the burden and stress of managing complex systems, and focusing on the deployment of citizen-centric solutions. Ultimately this allows municipalities and government bodies to focus on their core mandates of service delivery and economic development.

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