

Harnessing the power of apps



By [Lionel Moyal](#)

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With the increasing affordability and pervasiveness of smartphones and tablets, apps have rapidly become a part of everyday life. From games and messaging to banking, handy tools and more, apps have revolutionised the way people interact on a social level.

As mobility evolves and becomes more acceptable in the workplace, many businesses have begun to harness the power of apps in the form of enterprise applications. Major vendors too are beginning to include mobile devices and app services into their strategy.

The reality is that people enjoy apps, and using them for a variety of tasks means that they are able to interact on their terms, using a medium that they choose, at their preferred time. This presents an enormous opportunity for public sector to reach citizens in a manner that the citizens choose, keeping them engaged.

Revolutionise service delivery

By incorporating apps into strategy, public sector entities can revolutionise service delivery.

For example, these apps can create easy and convenient ways to report incidents, query rates and bills as well as lodge service requests to mention a few. Conversely, local authorities can also benefit from apps, including police, road traffic departments, emergency services and more. Apps present a direct contrast to traditional channels of communication between public sector and its citizens - they are personal, offering the ability to engage in direct interaction with immediate feedback.

Instead of citizens having to stand in a physical queue, or wait on hold at a contact centre, apps are always available, and automated. In addition, with the price of smartphones continuing to decrease, apps are available to an increasingly broad sector of the population.

The potential for apps is practically limitless. For example, an app was recently developed that allows citizens to take photographs of potholes and faulty traffic lights with their Smartphone or tablet, geo-tagging the location and then uploading this information to the local municipality's information systems. This is greatly assisting with the identification of problems and faster resolution.

By providing a platform for two-way feedback, and by collecting a wealth of user information, including demographic and location-based data, apps assist public sector in gathering real intelligence about infrastructure challenges and issues. This

enables them to track, plan, prepare fixes, assign maintenance teams and deliver services more effectively.

Personalised experience

Moreover, by providing a personalised experience, which enables citizens to track information that is relevant to them and trace the progress of their requests, local government and municipalities can help to close the gap between service delivery and citizens.

This concept of 'zero distance' is essential in enhancing service delivery, bringing services to citizens who need them, when they need them, using a medium of their choice. In turn, the business intelligence information delivered by apps becomes invaluable to public sector, enabling them to access live information for actionable insights that allow them to tailor services accordingly.

Taking advantage of apps requires commitment from the public sector. Apps need to be fit for purpose, and deliver an improved citizen experience, otherwise they will fail to attract an engaged user base - they cannot simply provide yet another interface into the same contact centre queue as telephone or email.

Apps need to integrate tightly into back end enterprise systems such as business process management (BPM), workflow and Enterprise Information Management (EIM). Developing a successful app requires identifying what the needs of the citizen are, and partnering with a developer who can deliver an app to meet these needs. While apps are established within the consumer space, they are new to public sector, and as such there are no hard and fast rules. The key is to start small, and not overcomplicate matters. The app world is fast-paced and requires quick turnaround, and users expect updates that add functionality, so it is easy to add features over time.

Ultimately apps provide an interface for citizens, that is familiar and which encourages engagement from users. Governments become more connected to their citizens, and are able to access real-time information that allows them to gain invaluable intelligence. This in turn empowers public sector to create zero distance - delivering an improved customer experience whilst transforming service delivery.

ABOUT LIONEL MOYAL

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