



# Citizen-centric government

Brian Spiteri examines how governments are using e-services to connect with citizens

**In their quest to reduce the digital divide, governments are constantly seeking new ways to bridge the physical distance between citizens' homes and public services offices. When effectively administered, e-services enable service providers, citizens and governments to successfully and securely interact and transact, with services available online over a common infrastructure. To meet the need for continuous connectivity, e-services management needs to be placed at the core of a connected framework for government services delivery. In particular, governments have to address the ever-growing concerns of privacy and confidentiality, whilst facilitating the take-up of online services. Identity management ensures the smooth transition to online services by enhancing the privacy, validity and integrity of information exchanged and transactions conducted electronically.**

With the introduction of an infrastructure that enables the publishing of digital certificates, governments can enable the issuing of secure electronic files that establish the citizen's or entity's identity during internet transactions. A public key infrastructure based on Microsoft Windows Server technology takes security a step further and goes beyond the mere use of a login name and password for conducting online transactions.

In making the shift to electronic means as smooth a procedure as possible, governments need to establish a rigorous process for matching electronic identification with physical identification. This requires a mechanism that goes beyond the authentication function, empowering citizens to assign delegation rights to trusted individuals or organisations to act on their behalf. Likewise, governments need to

regulate the registration and verification of an organisation's electronic identity to associate it with those acting on its behalf before it can have access to online services. Such a process enables authorised individuals to identify others as the organisation's employees, manage employee groups and delegate an e-service function to a person or to another organisation.

This kind of authentication structure represents the backbone of any citizen-centric and connected government framework that considers individuals in relation to their various roles in society. Even though one electronic identity is created for each citizen, individuals can still access services linked to their various roles in society, such as the financial controller of a company, the president of a social club or an appointed representative of someone else.

The e-government infrastructure needs to support the business transformation of governments to guarantee the necessary flexibility and peace of mind that additional functionality can be integrated at a later stage. A key function is system interoperability that enables the sharing of information through common standards and policies, helping governments to increase flexibility in their approaches.

Scalability and interoperability are integrated with the concepts of convenience and customer-centricity, which directly impact upon the citizen's experience with online services. The use of Active Directory technology means that citizens need only access one internet portal to benefit from the whole range of available online services, irrespective of whether they require the input of one government agency or several.

By bringing all government services together within a single, safe and user-friendly online

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portal, governments will be repositioning their services from a silo-based structure to a service-cluster approach, cutting across public sector organisational boundaries. The notion of citizen centricity will relieve public institutions of administrative burdens, whilst more accurately and securely addressing people's concerns about public services.

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