

Round Table (Country) Reports: Day 2

Larry Caffrey

ICA Editor

Larry Caffrey, ICA. Welcome to the second session of our Round Table where we discuss in some detail the contents of your country reports. Once again, this afternoon, I will try to avoid the most straightforward statements in the country e-reports because you can read these all for yourselves when you are able to see them up on the website next week. That's for those of you who haven't already had the opportunity to read them. So I am going to try and look behind the reports to find out what is not being said, or is perhaps being said slightly in the background but just possibly might be critical in e-Government delivery.

Now yesterday I raised a few pointers and said we'd be returning to these pointers over the next couple of days. Just to remind you, I have noted that in a number of the reports the countries are now reporting upon delivering or at least identifying the need for second phase strategies in the delivery of e-Government. That's an interesting point because I think it means is the end date going to move or is this an entirely different exercise? I'm also going to raise the query of the national portals, the one-stop portals, what lies behind them? I'm not convinced from your reports that there is a firm architectural structure supporting the one-stop portals. I would like your views and perhaps some ideas as to how it may be improved, or the way in which you are working to improve them.

Internet. Again, every country mentions it. Some mentioned that it has been more important than others; some countries have even said that they have no clear policy on it. I will be asking the question in a minute, and asking for answers from you as to whether it is just another technology underpinning e-Government strategy or is it more critical than that. And if it is, are we doing anything about it to ensure its viability and availability. One of my pet interests is that in the reports; we always mention the consultation with the public. Just to make sure it's mentioned earns a nice little tick, I am going to ask how far we have actually consulted with the public, and what the public they've consulted happen to be.

Then I will raise again the view 2005 seems to be the end date, or it certainly was last year when all these e-Government strategies are going to be working, they were all going to be in place. There is all going to be a better tomorrow. Again, I ask: is 2005 another phase of Y2K? I will also this afternoon be talking about open source. Will it ever happen? What is it? Seek one or two comments and identify some interest in new developments.

So let's see what's first. We all know that we all use the internet, and we all produce figures, usually very much the same figures, x percent actually use it, y percent don't, but as far as the delivery of e-Government goes, is the internet critical? And is it important strategically or is it just another tool among many others that we need to get us moving. Would anyone like to open the discussion on that for me? Come on, don't all be shy, or is nobody interested? Is the internet a strategic requirement to you fulfilling your e-Government strategies? Canada.

Helen McDonald, Canada. A qualified yes! I think we would certainly be seen by most of the Canadians as being deficient if we left this somehow off the table. I also see it, though, or we see it as an infrastructure that will be used to support other channels so while our focus is increasingly less on the e, more on the service delivery, quality of service, efficiency of service, it plays a strong role in supporting the others. Our rhetoric is also trying to privilege self-service which Canada does include the internet, perhaps primarily internet, but also

things like IVR and other systems, so that's the emphasis we are increasingly trying to make that the self-service channels are the privileged, or where we want to encourage migration.

Larry Caffrey. Thank you. Sweden, please.

Knut Rexed, Sweden. I think that if it hadn't existed, we would have had to invent it. It provides the possibility of developing public, electronic services from service providers to the public efficiently. The question is, can services be guaranteed? I take it, can we really trust that the internet is always functioning. In my mind, and I think that it is Swedish policies that must be one of the goals of government evaluation of homeland security to assess that the internet is such structure and back-up facilities in your national territory that you can guarantee that it will continue with the work without disturbances, even in the case of major emergencies and catastrophes, minor catastrophes in your country.

Larry Caffrey. Thank you. Israel first and then I will go to New Zealand

Benny Raab, Israel. We feel that the internet is a tool that can help the expansion of e-Gov in giving service to the citizen, to the public. We try sometimes to think that it is the 'God' itself, not only my feeling, but our feeling that it is a tool that can help and that is what it is. And we don't use internet for e-gov service, there is government service without e, and therefore our feeling is that it is a tool.

Larry Caffrey. Okay, thank you Benny. New Zealand, welcome to the conference.

Edwin Bruce, New Zealand. Three comments on the internet. I suspect without the internet which was a relatively disruptive technology, we probably would not have had the sort of e-Government strategies we've currently got. Secondly, from our perspective the internet protocols equally is important as the internet itself, and thirdly while we are thinking about wiring up our agencies and connecting in together we are not assuming the use of the internet but we are assuming the use of internet protocols, which means we need to put on a secure-Government network.

Larry Caffrey. Thank you. I am moving on. Switzerland please. Again, welcome back.

Jean-Jacques Didisheim, Switzerland. Of course, without internet we would not be speaking about e-Government. In our e-Government strategy, we have an e-Government projects portfolio that we update every year, and we definitely have projects in there which are not specifically internet projects. In fact we are having discussions now because there have been a one time action to give a special funding for e-Government projects. So of course everybody suddenly had e-Government projects to announce, in all ministries, because they thought they would get some money for that. So we had to think about criteria, what are the criteria for an IT project to be an e-Government project. And if you think about this, it is not easy at all. But we have come up with a list of criteria which is based on our e-Government strategy which has some specific objectives, such as to increase transparency, increase flexibility, etc. Then we try to measure projects against these criteria to decide whether they belong to the portfolio of e-Government projects.

Larry Caffrey. Thank you, Finland.

Olavi Kongas, Finland. We have had some positive developments actually this year, because we now have a copy of the one of the route servers, domain route servers of the internet so that has been one of the main points so far. Another good development has been that the internet service providers have duplicated first their internal exchange, and now it will be the third one which makes it more robust. We have quite a large organisation of private and public on continuous planning, a civil defence type of thing, and every two years we have a rehearsal, and last September we had a major simulation of a situation of a, let's say a very

big terrorist, state terrorist campaign and so on, and the simulation showed that actually the telecommunications infrastructure now been mainly based on IP's it is much more robust than it used to be in the secret service world.

Larry Caffrey. Okay, anyone else? Yes, Austria.

Hans Werner Ksica, Austria. I will ask if all main applications, private or not private, are going to be web-based if internet isn't the main background for more and more registrations every day. When private industry saw a huge number of financial administration logistic processes via internet, would it not be a tragedy if governments will not be able to solve all our problems.

Larry Caffrey. Thank you. Denmark please.

Yih-Jeou Wang, Denmark. Yes. You ask whether there is a clear policy for the internet. Yes and no. In Denmark, we, at the moment, just finished a preliminary analysis of the mobility of the infrastructure as part of the total assessment of the vulnerability of the society in Denmark, which our government has resolves as a result of 9/11. One of the preliminary results is that we got to internet almost all public institutions are in fact dependant on it, no surprise in that. But what was more interesting is that there are few of the public institutions are prepared to or have emergency plans concerning how to keep running things if something goes wrong. And the result therefore that we from the Ministry of Science and Technology and Innovation in Denmark, will try to co-ordinate a common effort to structure the work concerning vulnerabilities where we got to the electronic infrastructure, and also the general telecommunication infrastructure, and also looking at how that can be a common framework for working with vulnerabilities in general not just if there is an emergency or crisis or war in Denmark but also more in everyday running of government offices. How should the different public authorities institutions, how should they prepare for eventualities and so on.

Larry Caffrey. Thank you. Any other comments? Yes please, U.S.

Barry West, USA. Yes, the internet has really become a de facto standard for us in the United States. The e-Gov act of 2002 quantified first.gov as the federal portal. However, we have no over-arching internet policy for all agencies. Most individual agencies have come up with their own policies and posted those on-line. You do see some similarities amongst the various agencies but the policies are very high level. I think for the most part, you can guarantee the services, whether it be weather information, the IRS, most, all of these systems now have fault tolerance and data redundancy and back-ups in place with up-times with very high numbers. But we still look at the internet as just one channel of many. There are other different types of dissemination methods; we don't totally rely on the internet. And the other issue is that we still only have approximately 50% of our total population using the internet.

Larry Caffrey. Thank you. Mexico.

Claudio Interdonato Giumarra, Mexico. Yes, from my point of view I don't think we really have a clear policy in Mexico about internet. Internet was built by the various departments; national science foundation and the like in Mexico with the national foundation working to build the first backbone in the world, especially for all the scientific R&D departments. Then the dot-coms come in and even from the-Government side you see a channel to deliver information very quick and update information. The problem is that we do not have such a clear policy on what is a secure channel right now. We cannot guarantee in that point of view the service. At least not before we try getting certificate agents, try to get some public infrastructure and tie it up with some regulation laws that would make that information interchange more secure. If there is need, of course, I think, it is an incredible channel. We are hoping in the future to give more and more kind of services, not so much as now this stage. I would say that the information stage which has given us a transactional, which has got

some examples of real market places and place where the really interchange information you see as a secure channel. So I think we still have a lot to do with that. For the side of Mexico, wanting at working at is at least to build a DPM for the-Government so that will allow to get more secure information inside, apply some public infrastructure and of course, a layout of web services to be able to offer interoperability between the systems. That is all.

Larry Caffrey. Thank you. Australia.

Robin Fleming, Australia. We wanted to mirror the U.S. that its one channel, and that some of our youth based agencies like child support are now developing more SMS base strategies and internet based strategies.

Larry Caffrey. Thank you. Anyone else? Portugal.

Luis Vidigal, Portugal. Just a small comment. For me, its more a new technology for old problems. Problems that you face here are still the same. Corporation integration they are all human problems, not technological problems. So you now have the hyper technology – you can link everything to everybody and everybody to but you still have the same problem. That is, corporation and integration that is a human problem, not the technologist not sold yet.

Larry Caffrey. Thank you Luis. Right well I think we've given that a good airing. the U.K.

Paul Waller, UK. Thank you Larry. Yes I certainly agree with New Zealand that the rise and take-up of the internet is both a significant impetus to electronic government, and provides very useful standards. However, had the cause of history been different, I am quite sure that we will be now talking about interactive television government or telephone-Government or mobile phone-Government or something I can't even imagine-Government. And should, for example in the U.K., the active use of inter-active digital television reach 90 % more while the internet stays stagnant at 50 % then politically our effort will rapidly shift into that direction as that service medium, and in deed most of our policy thinking, our analysis and our development of infrastructure bears that in mind. We spend quite a lot of time thinking about mobile and television and other delivery channels.

Larry Caffrey. Thank you. Anyone else? Now it has struck me then that there is no doubt that internet is a very important tool. It is interesting to note that in a number of reports some countries are starting to think that there are other channels of service delivery. Again, though, it is quite clear that a number of countries are looking at the main service to the citizen has been through the internet, both now and in the foreseeable future. It's something I think we need to be aware of, not only ourselves but particularly the banking industry. I would like to leave it with two thoughts: it's said that over 90% or over 95% of the money in the world is moved around electronically these days, and a lot of that is also done through the internet these days. We have suffered throughout the world a number of catastrophic electronic failures in various countries. There are rumours that the Doomsday weapon where people can actually control electricity is around. Is this going to affect the way in which we are planning our e-Government delivery and in fact if we do not have the Internet for long periods of time and we have already seen where it has been taken off the air for great areas of the world can we still deliver e-Government the way we wish. It would be interesting to see how we tackle those problems over the next couple of years I feel. Now, unless anyone wants to say anything on that issue, I am going to move to another one.

Every country's report mentions quite easily, I hesitate to say glibly because I don't actually mean it in that way, that consultation has taken place. I am not sure though how that consultation does take place. One or two governments' reports do clearly indicate what they have done one way - others don't. I am interested to know for a much more wider interest the methods that are used. In parts one or two countries can say something on that and do they work, also having put the tick that we have consulted the public is that enough? Is the

consultation just for the good of the writer of the report or do they really mean they have consulted the citizen, whom I think John from Australia yesterday said is really the owner of e-Government? I have been in IT for 42 years and I have been asked my opinion as an expert, or so-called expert, at times, I have never ever been asked my opinion as to what has been done as a member of the general public. Has anyone? Does anyone know anybody? Yes I have been asked what do I think of a soap powder, once to my great astonishment and delight I was actually offered a choice of two beers and asked which one I liked. And we all know that Pepsi and Coke are carrying out these sorts of tests. But does it really happen in e-Government. Perhaps one or two countries can say where they have been particularly strong for the benefit of others and somewhere they have been particularly weak.

Dave Molchaney, USA. In Fairfax we did do - as we redesigned our website and as we worked with our technology we did do - focus groups as well as surveys. Focus groups are normally done through my library system and they are on a walk-in basis. We ask people if they would like to be part of a focus group, normally about twenty to thirty people round that much we could hopefully get in one, it is usually more the twenties is what we get. We did them periodically around our redesign. We did four formal ones. We had about probably fifteen to twenty people in each one to ask them what they thought. We also worked with a Chamber of Commerce to bring together businesses, particularly small businesses, to find out what they really needed. They were very formal settings and the Chamber actually put them together for us. We do web surveys periodically and as part of our redesign and on the web survey we are not looking just for Fairfax residents we are looking for anyone that possibly could use the website and there are our kiosks we keep periodically we put on and take off surveys also for users to take when they actually finish and those surveys we look at for demographics especially to find out what type of people are actually using the kiosks and what we should be gearing things towards, they are not huge groups of people but I think the bottom line is to continue doing them periodically so that you do actually reach different people and hopefully get a lot of information. We also do internal focus groups for actual staff of the of the county and officials to ask them from working with the public, their customers, what it is they think that people would like on our various technology platforms and how they would like to use them. Against the periodic thing every time we are about to make a major change or think we should make a major change we do that, and probably the most interesting thing was out of the last go round was people literally just did not like the colours that was resounding issue with colour, so we just changed the colours and changed the format a little bit, so it was a tiny change but it was apparently one that people just really did not like so OK

Larry Caffrey, ICA. Is that Taiwan's card up. Welcome

Michael Lin from Taiwan. As regarding the consulting with the general public I have a quite interesting experience. In the past we did not take such kind of issue seriously and here, last year by the end of the last year in order to improve our e-Government poll site, we held one meeting. This was a one-day meeting; we just named it a Consulting Committee for the e-Government website and the result from the general public is overwhelming; well beyond our expectation. We named a venue and set a capacity for 500 people but in the end over eight hundred people turned up; quite over our expectation. In June of this year we held another one in a different city and found the same result; the general want to participate to make some decisions on our e-Government. So in the future we would like to take the issue to consult with the general public more serious. Thank you.

Larry Caffrey, ICA. Thank you, Denmark please.

Michael Bang-Kjeldgaard, Denmark. In Denmark we have been working with consultations of the public in different ways, for instance a number of authorities and I can mention especially one project we had when I was working in organisation of local government we had an international corporation project where we made consultations with

focus groups and we made usability tests which is basically where you sit with a user for about an hour and they try to sort different tasks and you have a dialogue with them that is one concept and that is used in a number of authorities regarding a number of websites. Then we have another approach, which is run by what we call the Technology Advisory Board, and they have used a method of consulting focus groups regarding issues for instance, trust regarding e-Government. Then we have a third approach which is translated into English as 'Top of the Web' and the Top of the Web concept has been used now on a wider scale within the European Union and the concept here is actually three things Top of the Web covers all public websites I don't remember how many but is hundreds or may be thousands, so all public institutions who have a website or project website re being scanned by a group of - well it's not exactly experts its actually students - but they have a general scheme they are going through the websites and evaluating the websites on different indicators that's one part of Top of the Web. Another part of Top of the Web is a questionnaire which can be implemented on the websites but it is the owner of the website who decides if they want to do but a lot of them do it and that's a survey where the users can give their opinion about the website and then the third thing is a survey to the owners of the website where they have a questionnaire they can answer that is a sort of self evaluation, not least regarding the back office gains from the website and specially the results from the first two sections are being published on the web on the Top of the Web website so that everybody can go in and compare themselves sort of like a benchmarking comparison of how well the website is performing .

Larry Caffrey, ICA. Thank you. Mexico again please.

Claudio Interdonato Giumarra, Mexico. Just an idea I would like to share with the group on this topic. If we see the citizen as a customer usually the customer would like to be treated in a very special way, as a personal way, and so I think our citizen should look for a personal experience through the web so I think it would be a good idea to explore what has been said about marketing one to one strategies. We should look at those techniques and it would be interesting to try to apply marketing one to one techniques for the e-government in order to build profiles, very personalised profiles, for each citizen. That's all.

Larry Caffrey, ICA. Thank you, anyone else, yes - got someone at the back there. Canada first and then I go to Israel.

Diane Fulford, Canada. I would just like to mention that I deal with the business side in the Federal Government in Canada and I think the dilemma that we have with public consultation is the push pull syndrome. We do all of the focus tests and the feedback forms but I think at a certain point in time you have to admit to yourselves that - at least in Canada -businesses are not knocking at our doors for increased service and in fact you really have to almost push some of this out and there are whole strategies that are not just passive consultations because I am not sure how much we would be successful in pushing businesses to move into this area more aggressively and I can relate this to the banks. If the banks had ever asked me years ago whether I wanted ATM I probably would have said no. They went ahead and did it, they did not bother consulting with me, by the way, but you know I love that service now so I think that the dilemma that we all have is to what extent do you follow and to what extend do you push and to what extent do you allow it to be pulled in or have strategies with your clientele that pull it in. For example we have a student connection programme where we have students on a yearly basis going out and teaching our small businesses how to get e-enabled as part of the e-supply chain on a continual basis so that there is sort of balance between push and pull.

Larry Caffrey, ICA. Thank you, Israel,

Jacob Navot, Israel. We do have a mutual working groups with tax consultants and accountants which are working all the year round and usually before introducing a new service we used to look together to talk it out, I think it is for the best for both sides.

Larry Caffrey, ICA. Ok thank you, US again,

Barry West, USA. Just to add to what David had mentioned earlier, we do use results from the Harris Poll and the Consumer Protection Survey to routinely gather citizen feedback. We also collect feedback information from our websites and all of our customer relationship management systems that we have implemented draw upon a lot customer feedback as well with the personalisation involved.

Larry Caffrey, ICA. Thank you. Any one else, yes Finland.

Olavi Kongas, Finland. We have been in one case rather systematic and that was the reconstruction of our citizen portal. We have a user panel or more than one hundred volunteers who had the possibility to participate in the-Government project where we had a pilot and so on. One of the results for this was that they abandon the so-called 'Life Cycle' approach from the structure. After the portal went into production there has been at least one web survey after that. Generally since 1999 there has been every autumn a survey on opinions of public service delivery should be and what the public are interested in and why they are not using for instance, the Internet and so on and one of the good things with the survey is that we get a lot of democratic background information which we do not get if it is just follow the usage on the web. We were also together with associations surveyed rather regularly the small and medium sized enterprises and their wishes and constraints and so on and using of the web but all this could be much more systematic.

Larry Caffrey, ICA. Thank you, any now to New Zealand.

Edwin Bruce, New Zealand. Two comments, we have used most of the strategies that have been presented in this room but there is one that we used in particular. It's a little risky and we used it for both the New Zealand government portal and the authentication, which is about identification and it's usually a pretty risky area. We actually invited a whole range of people to contribute and we have got quite a lot of serious input from people that think in this space all the time.

Larry Caffrey. Yes, thank you. Yes it may be risky but its taking a chance with your eyes open I think that's the main thing I know we have heard a couple of comments stating that they have only got fifty percent on the internet so if you actually manage to ask those people what they think of the internet you might get a different answer from those who do. Now to the U.K.

Paul Waller, UK. While in the office of the e-Envoy we have a team that is effectively a marketing team that cannot in any circumstances go more than ten minutes without saying the word 'brand' and who quite rightly have employed the usual techniques for measuring brand recognition and service packaging. Mirroring what Canada has recently said I think it would be a hell of a lot more use from both the publics point of view and our point of view if Government focused its consultation effort on the policies and legislation that lie behind the public services rather than the means of delivery of the public services.

Larry Caffrey. Thank you. Yes Canada first and then and then Singapore.

Helen MacDonald, Canada. Just two points notwithstanding what Diana said about the business side we have done two things I think that are interesting on the citizen side, one we are trying to get at through large surveys a sense of what the deterrents are of satisfaction, what kinds of things that we can control, timeliness of service, how polite your staff are, do they go the extra mile with a smile, those kinds of things and what power each of them have to change how people think of our service and therefore think of Government. I think the other thing we have done is taken some of our large public opinion polls where you have got three thousand to five thousand in the sample and we have used it for segmentation analysis to

try and understand are there chunks of the population that no matter what you do they are never going to come to you on the internet, or they might come to you on the internet to surf for information but they never transact with you on the internet they just do not trust you, the Government, the internet, the technology things like that and I think that is also been helpful in trying to understand how far you can push the internet not only with different clients but with parts of the population who want a different or specific service experience that don't include the internet.

Larry Caffrey. Thank you, I know I did start with this suggestion you know who actually asks the question in fact when people come to read your report I think they will be as impressed as I was to the extent in some areas you have actually gone to. Right Denmark once more and then I am going to finish with Singapore.

Yih-Jeou Wang, Denmark. We did some similar things we have just heard about from Canada, I think the important thing here is that if you can get a time series here it is very interesting to watch what is happening with the segments, are they moving towards e-government or do they stay or moving away maybe because of all the issues coming up for instance regarding trust and securities stuff like that simplicity; whatever. Thank you .

Larry Caffrey. Right thank you, Choy Peng you have probably gone down the route as far or further than most people perhaps you can give us some ideas.

Choy Peng Wu, Singapore. I wont profess to be that, but I was looking at public consultation and I think that there are very many different ways in which we are talking about and a lot of us are still talking about usability feed back whether a particular service is easy to use whether a particular website is well designed and that's particular done through surveys, focus group discussions, usability tests and so on and I think most agencies have done that. In Singapore we almost have a requirement that most of the e-services before they can be rolled out and put on line they must go through at least one round of usability tests through focus group discussion so at the service level yes, but I don't call that consultation because to me there is just pure feed back, this what I have done, does it look good, it is easy to use, is it convenient, is it intuitive. But we ask the public do you want e-Government, - No- because they do not know what it means. I think it is difficult to imagine something that you never seen been before based on past track record and current experience so when we developed the first e-Government action plan there was no consultation if that is what you mean but when we did the second round because every plan has a three year rolling plan with a define start date, end date, budget and deliverables, when we did the second plan which we just launched in July we did go out for quite wide consultation, we had focus group discussions, we had journalists round table where we invited members of the press and the media and we wanted their feedback , and we used the-Government feedback unit mechanism which is such an interesting device where there is actually a feedback unit who will organise monthly discussions on topical issues about government and they invite a cross section of population.

We use that mechanism to understand the perspective and needs of young working adults, students and housewives and retirees and we get different feed back but that is really for us to understand what other services are actually good for them that but were never thought of. So yes we do consultation only because by then they know what on line services is all about and so on. But at the highest level is really public consultation in generally that is a push for any public policy to be published on the internet and open for public consultation. But the agency can decide at which stage do they consult. Do they consult when you are just thinking about it or do they consult when they have more or less have a draft and then get some feed back or do they actually consult on implementation. So there is a push but we leave it to the agencies to decide because the policy development is a long cycle so agency will decide at which point of that process do they consult the public, so that they achieve many levels of consultation.

Larry Caffrey. Right, thank you; very interesting. Phase one of e-Government, is ‘...believe me it will do you good’. Phase two is ‘...did it do you any good and how can we make it better?’ In a nutshell that sounds pretty interesting; thank you.

I am going to say thank you all for an interesting discussion. I am going to leave it there except to say that I will open tomorrow morning with Open Systems and to start with we will be hearing from our EC colleague who has some interesting features to talk about and on the open source idea and something that may interest us for the future.