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The impact of Social Media in the Public Sector

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Abstract

In recent years the flood of new technologies and the expanded use of social media have already changed the way people communicate with each other. New technologies and social media, however, can change the communication between Government and the citizens as they contribute decisively to the transformation of public administration towards a new and open format that will be characterized by: a) active participation of citizens in public affairs, b) close collaboration between public services and between government and citizens, and c) transparency of the State activities. The transition to an open governance is a process with many stages. This paper presents different models of e-government and open government referred to in the literature, and proposes a new model of open government. Furthermore, in this paper we will try to answer questions such as: What are the guidelines and commitments to Greece, Europe and the world? What is the level of penetration of new technologies in public administration in different countries and which ones are actively moving towards a model of open government? We will also present representative efforts developed in Greece and abroad that attempt to serve the principles of transparency, active participation, innovation and collaboration in the public sector. Finally suggestions and recommendations are made for further study and research.

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1. Introduction

Government agencies slowly but increasingly adopt social technologies to better serve their mission. These technologies can gradually reengineer the old model of public sector as they offer numerous opportunities to: increase government transparency and trust, create new forms of citizens' participation and engagement in public issues, and enhance inter and intra - organizational collaboration. The relationship between provider and recipients, in our case between government and citizens is changing.

Today, citizens extensively use Information and Communication Technologies, not only for professional purposes but also in their social life and consequently are demanding to interact with government with similar tools. Therefore, citizens' expectations for a modern, open, and effective government sector are rising. On the other hand, government agencies face austerity measures and an intensive scrutiny of their budgets, leading to governments to look for new forms of innovation for their own services (Lagos & Kutsikos, 2011). This economic situation together with the increasing citizens' demand for easier, hassle-free and seamless interaction with the Government, greater transparency and access to information, lead government agencies to explore new tools like new digital technology and web 2.0 applications (open source or not) that will ease financial pressure and improve the quality of public services (Nasiopoulos et al., 2011a; Nasiopoulos et al., 2011b).

2. Literature review

2.1. What are Web 2.0 and Social Media?

Tim O' Really described Web 2.0 as a platform spanning all connected devices (O' Reilly, 2005). It is characterized by Transparency, Honesty, Trust and Reputation and it is underpinned by a simple, usable, participatory, self-service and decentralized model (Zambonini, 2006). Web 2.0 can be seen as a meaningful movement from the static web pages of Web 1.0 towards an environment with easy-to-use web tools that enable creative and collaborative use of the Web. The Web 2.0 has an "architecture of participation" as it offers data and services from multiple sources, including individual users, and these data and services can be updated, consumed and remixed by others (O' Reilly, 2005). Creation and sharing are fundamental aspects of Web 2.0 service. Web 2.0 has the potential to mutually maximize the collective intelligence of the participants.

Social media can be generally understood as Internet-based applications that carry consumer-generated content which encompasses "media impressions created by consumers, typically informed by relevant experience, and archived or shared online for easy access by other impressionable consumers" (Blackshaw, 2006). Social media can be classified according to two key dimensions: social presence / media richness and self-presentation / self-disclosure (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). According to another classification (Kotler, Kartajaya, & Setiawan, 2010), social media can be grouped in two broad categories depending on their main purpose: a) *expressive social media* where users express themselves by sharing text, video, picture, music, and b) *collaborative social media* where users share knowledge and content, in general, and work together for a common goal. Social media offer a unique opportunity to reform the relationship between government and citizens, from a mono or bidirectional information exchange into a many-to-many communication process (Agostino, 2013). Government agencies try to become citizen-centric and social media represent powerful tools to enhance public engagement (Kutsikos, 2007). Actually, "digital citizens are all over social media" (Accenture, 2012) and there must governments go if they wish to connect with them. Thus, government agencies should develop their web-based applications in a service quality context, in order to fully utilize their capabilities (Santouridis et al., 2009; 2012; Santouridis & Trivellas, 2009).

2.2. An overview of E-Government, Gov 2.0 and Open Government

Initially, e-government applications were designed to provide information from government to citizens in a mono-directional manner and consequently without any reflexive feedback mechanisms. (The World Bank, 2011) defines **e-government** as "the use by government agencies of information technologies that have the ability to transform relations with citizens, businesses, and other arms of government. These technologies can serve a variety of different ends: better delivery of government services to citizens, improved interactions with business and