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Citizens as Prosumers:
The Next Frontier of Service Innovation

By Maryantonett Flumian

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In our increasingly networked world, issues and problems quickly spill outside the organizational and even geographic boundaries of governmental institutions. Technologies have evolved at an incredible rate, but the institutional and organizational learning that governments require to apply these technologies to problems progresses much more slowly. Senior government leaders need to understand that online networks are increasingly beating public institutions at their own game. Forming and reforming around social issues, economic production, even national defense and terrorism, these networks have become gathering points of knowledge that can convert into rapid action. Governments, which once defined citizens' roles and responsibilities, are finding that citizens are turning to these communities and organizations to marshal resources and launch solutions. Governments may be key players or not. To remain relevant, governments will need to be agile, open and collaborative in their approach to solving pressing public problems.

THE FUTURE IS ALREADY HERE IT'S JUST NOT EVENLY DISTRIBUTED

Only after learning from global best practices did we begin to reshape our business practices and behaviors to reshape both our front-end service experience and our supporting back-end shared services and processes simultaneously. As a [cabinet] minister, I had to balance innovation and risk. But I knew we weren't going anywhere if we didn't risk something.1

— Honourable Joseph Volpe, Member of Parliament, Canada

In the District of Columbia (D.C.), Chief Technology Officer Vivek Kundra is taking his daily data shower and making decisions.

At his meeting with Mayor Adrian Fenty, he is working through the portfolio of technology projects under his management, all of which are being monitored in real time. Kundra and his boss can see how much was budgeted, how much has been spent, and how much is left over. The system works like a stock market: "We make the decisions on which ones to sell, which ones to buy, which ones to...sink more investment into."[2]

Back in his office, plasma screens display information about tasks happening in the schools, streets and administrative offices of the city. New tasks on the big spreadsheets come up in yellow, past-due tasks in red, and completed tasks in green. The city administrator is watching it, too. They'll be talking over the performance data at a management accountability meeting later in the day. Somewhere else a D.C. citizen is preparing for her presentation to city council by downloading exactly the same information, and plotting trends on her laptop via Google Earth.

On the streets, cops are using laptops and iPhones to write tickets, no paper required. In the city offices, a new employee searches and finds a page on the administration wiki, DCPedia, on what to do on her first day of work. Later she'll come across a sophisticated brief on procurement practices that will prepare her for her brand new project,

and make contact with an expert on the subject in another department via his wiki profile page. But first she'll find out the best places to go to lunch in the neighborhood.

What's new?

D.C.'s innovation is a striking one. Where most governments build mainframes and buy software, D.C. is using Google services and open source wikis for everything from word processing to performance measurement, to service improvement. One of Kundra's first initiatives was to migrate from expensive enterprise platforms to open-source solutions, in particular Google Apps. There are no department-by-department mainframes. All the information is searchable and findable. Employees and citizens search from their desktop, just like they do when they're at home. Kundra's mantra is, "What am I doing in my personal life or at home that can't be scaled or done at work?"[3]

Getting results

Mayor Fenty picked Kundra to advise D.C. agencies on how to improve services in all areas of District government to business, residents, and visitors. In Washington, D.C., 86 agencies employing 38,000 employees serve 600,000 citizens. Kundra has introduced Web 2.0 technologies to increase transparency, reduce costs and speed decision-making. (See inset.)

Increasing transparency has increased the city's accountability to stakeholders and improved outcomes for citizens. Amongst other innovations, D.C. has created a city-wide data warehouse that enables all government employees and stakeholders to see and help analyze what isn't working in the community. Kundra says, "I want people to hold us accountable – whether they're a student or an expert. Releasing data is integral to analyzing our operations and seeing where we can improve, where we have improved and where we have failed. Eighty percent of it can be shared and thus it will be shared."[4]

Why D.C. matters

The D.C. experience demonstrates the benefit of a strategy of collaboration based on web 2.0 technology. D.C.'s strategy has not required the huge investments in technology forecast just a few years ago – or, indeed, the investments that many companies and institutions continue to make.

While this approach is well within the reach of most governments, very few have followed D.C.'s example. Why? Governments, and the structures that support them, have been created to function as the perpetual guardians of perpetual issues – structured for stability rather than innovation. Organizational silos, now much reviled, were created for sound administrative reasons. Countless checks and balances helped discourage hasty change to the underlying legal and financial authority. But political and bureaucratic authorities became highly vested in protecting their turf. While political systems of government have evolved, the structures that support them have not.

THE FUTURE IS HERE: CONVERTING TO A WEB 2.0 ENVIRONMENT HAS TRANSFORMED D.C.'S MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT:

- D.C. has reduced costs. Employee email accounts now cost $1.60 per user via Google, versus $8 per user on the city's previous commercial, off-the-shelf (COTS) solution. By moving to cloud computing for its web applications and YouTube for video-hosting, the city saved over 90%. And using open-source wiki solutions saved more than $4 million over a COTS equivalent.
- The city can configure and scale solutions (such as a new procurement process) almost immediately, at minimal cost.
- Senior leaders, staff, and citizens are empowered to raise productivity across the District.
- The city can more effectively monitor performance.
- Public Service values such as transparency, openness and accountability are entrenched.
- A culture of innovation, creativity and collaboration has replaced the old culture.

D.C. is saving money. Says Kundra: "While systems integrators will stick you with multi-million dollar, multi-year projects, with Google I was able to rapidly transform a lot of government operations without the headache of managing a massive infrastructure." The transition to Google Apps gave D.C. access to Google's continuously updated set of applications, at a fraction of the cost and management of massive infrastructure.

A new, open-source wiki- and YouTube- based procurement process was created in a matter of weeks to support this transformation. Kundra says that the new process has increased transparency, reduced the risk of corruption and is attracting more bidders than the previous tool.

As Peter Macleod, public systems design expert and founder of the Toronto-based think tank the Planning Desk, has put it, we are trying to run twenty-first century software on eighteenth-century hardware.[5]

Citizens' skills in the use of collaborative technology far outstrip governments. If governments are forced to get up to speed to meet citizens on their own terms, the possibilities of drawing in more knowledge into the governance process are impressive, flipping the conventional decision-making on its head. It's an open question whether government can actually adapt.[6]

— Frank Graves, President, EKOS Research

A call to action!

The time has come to leapfrog into a future that D.C. is prefiguring: a future where organizational structure matters less and less because information, the lifeblood of decision-making, is freer than at any time in our history. If decision-making itself can be shared in new ways, then the 'touchpoints' between citizens and the state – namely, public services – can become conduits for creating new kinds of public value.

This paper will briefly recap how governments have been reshaped through the prism of service delivery and describe why mass collaboration is the next logical step in government's evolution toward better outcomes. It concludes with suggestions for managing the leadership and cultural challenges that arise in the shift to a new paradigm of collaboration.

THE WORLD IS CHANGING – IS GOVERNMENT KEEPING UP?

In our increasingly networked world, issues and problems quickly spill outside the organizational and even geographic boundaries of governmental institutions. Technologies have evolved at an incredible rate, but the institutional and organizational learning that governments require to apply these technologies to problems progresses much more slowly.

Given the size, complexity and political nature of government, the fear of failure usually prevents agencies from taking calculated risks on adopting new approaches and tools. Innovation requires painstaking preparation and consultation. Plans and priorities must be detailed enough to foresee every possible scenario and satisfy all doubters. Initiatives must be advanced at the "right" time in the political cycle. They must be costed and accounted for in excruciating detail. The nature of public interest demands such meticulous planning. Failures don't lead to bankruptcy, but they undermine the public's essential confidence in government.

Because government tends to be very risk-averse, agencies usually try to avoid involving outside parties in their attempts to introduce new technologies and processes. This reluctance to consult with "outsiders" exacerbates the assumption that only policy makers can understand the "risks" and "accountabilities" of government. The belief that "governments are different," and that solutions appropriate to corporate settings can't work in government, is self-fulfilling. It isolates government and reinforces the view that solutions must evolve slowly and respect the existing structure and organization of government – to the point that the ersatz "solution" has negligible impact.

But the world is moving on …

The real story in D.C. – and the lesson for governments around the world – is how knowledge, information, talent and energy begin to be moved, shaped and channeled in new ways, inside, across and outside of the boundaries of government. The big question is this: what roles and responsibilities will government, citizens, not-for-profits and business assume in a society where knowledge is everywhere, where hierarchies are anachronisms, and where the state is no longer king of the jungle but part of an ecosystem energized by mass collaboration?

In D.C., government is becoming a stronger part of the social ecosystem that binds individuals, communities, businesses and governments. – not by absorbing new responsibilities or building additional layers of bureaucracy, but through its willingness to open closed processes to broader input and innovation.

As the tools have begun to work, Kundra says, the organization is doing things very differently. "A great deal of the innovation is now happening on the front lines of our organization," he says. "Previously this was the last place you'd expect it to come from, but now we've opened up channels of communication with front-line, customer-facing employees, and they've responded with anything from the smallest innovations to the most complex ideas we've

contemplated. Our job is to take these ideas and figure out which ones we want to scale rapidly."[7]

This is not your average public service organization. Traditionally, innovation's home is at headquarters, where the 'strategic' view directs the work of a department. The front lines are responsible for delivering the programs that result from the headquarter-driven policy. There is a sharp division of labour: policy steers, services row. Citizens are participants at election time and otherwise they're passive consumers of services.

D.C. is creating a new kind of public sector culture that doesn't depend on organizational charts. An attitude of openness and transparency, together with accessible information and performance data, combines with collaborative tools to make space for collective evaluation, strategizing and action. Analysts meet counter staff meet web administrators, and their different perspectives generate insights that lead to new ideas. Citizens also participate, sharing the same information that guides decisions inside the administration.

Failure is not only tolerated in D.C. but accepted as part of learning the way to succeed, and openness and transparency are strategic approaches to fostering collaboration, insight and innovation. What's evolving is a platform for shared decision-making that has major implications for how government relates to citizens, and how the public sector creates value.

D.C. is on the vanguard of governments who are benefiting from the approach to mass collaboration pioneered by companies like eBay and Google, communities like Wikipedia's editors, and researchers in the scientific community. The impact on the public good is significant: one need only look to the mapping of the human genome (in a once unimaginably short time) using the power of a massively collaborative network of researchers.

Senior government leaders need to understand that networks are increasingly beating public institutions at their own game. Forming and reforming around social issues, economic production, even national defense and terrorism, these networks have become gathering points of knowledge that can convert into rapid action.

Governments that once defined the roles and responsibilities for citizenship are seeing citizens turn to these communities and organizations to marshal resources and launch solutions. Governments may be key players or not. To remain relevant, governments will need to be agile, open and collaborative in their efforts to solve pressing public problems.

SERVICE IS THE STARTING POINT

Mass collaboration has the potential to transform most spheres of government, but public service delivery is an especially promising area: mass collaboration can help government and the citizenry develop better, more timely and personalized service at lower costs with better outcomes. Many years of public opinion research shows a direct relationship between the direct service citizens receive and how they view their government. Polling expert Frank Graves says: "A basic element of trust is belief in the competence of a person or an institution to get things done. For citizens, services are a tangible expression of government's ability to do things well – or badly."[8]

Politicians have intuitively grasped the mantra that services to citizens must be improved. They do recognize that views of government are most often shaped by the direct experience of receiving benefits and services. Moreover, they recognize that services are not just the 'operational' arm of government. Services are the sharp end of the policy stick wielded by decision makers. Without well-designed services, the policy outcomes politicians seek as stewards can never become real.

Today's governments are the providers of benefits and services and citizens are the consumers. In the future, the power of the web and the experience that consumers are building in other non-governmental domains will enable those consumers of government services and benefits to become prosumers (i) – shaping the policy and the structures of programs, benefits and services to meet their needs and deliver better outcomes.

We will now briefly review what we have learned about the role service delivery has played in reshaping governments.

FROM IN-LINE TO ON-LINE

The first applications of web technology to government services and information in the mid-to-late 1990s focused, very successfully, on transactions: citizens could use the web for a range of simple tasks – finding information,

i Prosumerism is what happens when producers and consumers of services or products both actively participate in the creation of the goods and services in an ongoing way.

changing addresses, paying parking tickets, applying for permits. In this era, governments invested heavily in e-government.

In theory, the benefits were straightforward: paper forms became electronic forms, reducing handling time and costs and eliminating part of the need to staff information booths and offices. Moreover, for the user of the service, the always-on nature of the web was a huge improvement in convenience and accessibility (especially given the strict office hours that most government agencies keep).

But e-government applications were built in the image of existing organizational structures. Service New Brunswick, for example, had good results from its significant investment in a common platform for service transactions. The platform offered hunting, fishing and other license applications and payments. Business services became easier to use. But the organizational structures that caused the need to search out fifteen forms from fifteen places still remained. Moving online automated the process of getting a business going, but the next logical step – making those fifteen forms one form – was very difficult.

Other governments around the world encountered similar situations. Finland, for instance, implemented on-line transactions very successfully. But they too had trouble 'joining up' streamlined processes with Byzantine organizational structures. As an OECD report on Finland states:

> For now, it seems that e-government has had only minimal impact on organizational structure. E-Government structures and policy in Finland reflect current governance and arrangements within government. This could lead to an under-exploitation of the full potential of e-government as a facilitator for transformation of government structures. Further cultural change in the Finnish administration, as in most OECD countries, is required to maximize e-government benefits. This includes the willingness to collaborate across agencies.[9]

Governments expected to save money by adopting technology. Self-service should have been cheaper than full-service. But, in the early days, the e-channel did little to replace existing workloads, processes, and requirements. Very few paid attention to the real drivers of cost-savings and service improvement: redesigning the existing work, its flow, the competencies of its workforce and, most importantly, the interaction with citizens.

The shift to an on-line world was based on the following assumptions:

- That all legacy systems would have to be replaced entirely to connect benefits and services to citizens in different ways. The massive cost of such an overhaul continues to stall implementation in most countries.
- That CIOs should drive reforms, rather than the business line professionals and policy makers who best understood the outcomes they were trying to achieve for citizens.
- That line managers knew exactly what technologies they needed, their functionalities, and the trade-offs required to implement them.

Public policy makers began to realize that e-government was just one component of a broader shift in the role of government. Citizens around the world were beginning to demand greater accountability and transparency in service delivery. These demands grew out of citizens' experience

THE PATHFINDER: SERVICE NEW BRUNSWICK

In 1987, Frank McKenna was elected Premier of New Brunswick, an eastern Canadian province with a population of about 700,000. McKenna quickly decided that improving government was a key part of his strategy for raising the economic prospects of his province.

In 1992, McKenna's government initiated a pilot program that grew into one of the world's first one-stop shops for government services. The early days of Service New Brunswick were focused on making life easier for entrepreneurs who wanted to establish a small business. The program creators were surprised to learn of the dozens of hoops entrepreneurs had to jump through to just get started – 15 forms from 15 departments in 15 different locations. The pilot brought all this together in one office and put many of the forms online.

The pilot was later grafted onto the New Brunswick Geographical Information Service (GIS), which had responsibilities for assessments, real and personal property registries, and mapping. Donat Theirault, one of the visionaries behind Service New Brunswick, recognized that a cultural transformation was in order:

We had to take an organization (GIS) that was enforcement-focused and turn it into a service operation. And at the time, the web was useless, practically nonexistent, so we really concentrated on bringing the

businesses together, developing relationships with departments so that they would let us deliver service on their behalf, to develop quality that was similar or better than what they were delivering.

The departments at GIS that had delivered service could now focus on their core business and leave the service delivery 'front end' to Service New Brunswick. In 1998, the organization took on its current form as a consolidated 'single window' for transactional services and information that citizens need to conduct their personal and business lives.

with private sector service providers, who were investing in technologies and business process improvements to personalize and improve customers' service experience.

Government agencies needed a new breed of public managers who could understand the workings of government, appreciate the outcomes that policy makers were trying to achieve, work with the power of the technology and business processes, and be prepared to ask citizens how they could best be served.

CITIZEN-CENTRED SERVICE

In a New Yorker article entitled, "Million Dollar Murray", writer Malcolm Gladwell describes the life of Murray Barr, a mentally ill, alcoholic, homeless man, living in Reno, Nevada.[10] He eloquently describes the close relationship Barr had with police officers, social workers and medical staff over a decade of intoxication, recovery, rehab and relapse.

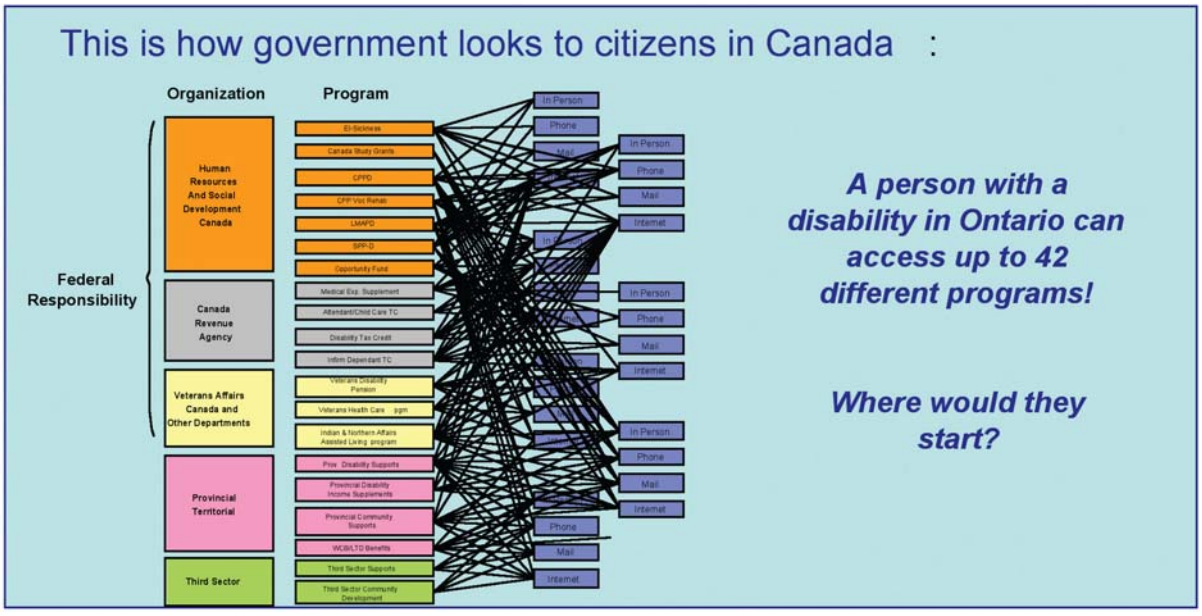
Murray required an incredible level of service from the police, medical, and social services, yet each service provider operated independently from the others. Discussing Murray, Patrick O'Bryan (a bike cop in downtown Reno) remarked:

> [We] realized that if you totaled up all his hospital bills for the ten years that he had been on the streets – as well as substance-abuse treatment costs, doctors' fees, and other expenses – Murray Barr probably ran up a medical bill as large as anyone in the state of Nevada. "It cost us one million dollars to do something about Murray", O'Bryan said.[11]

Gladwell's story about Murray Barr is instructive: government services often exist in isolation from one another when they shouldn't. These silos result in poor coordination, overlap and poor outcomes for the people whom government is supposed to be helping. Confusion, frustration and expense in personal time and public money are the eventual consequence for citizens. Silos cost millions. And people like Murray aren't helped. The Murray case provides an example of how governments are not designed to provide holistic service that meets Murray's needs.

Making Murray whole

Most citizens are not like Murray: they don't have his challenges, and they don't require such a complex web of governmental support. But even if you're just filing taxes, starting a business, replacing identification, or moving back into the workforce after losing a job, dealing with multiple government departments – all ostensibly there to help you achieve your goal – is often daunting. And moving from simple transactions to a more holistic service approach requires a broader look at the outcomes a government is trying to achieve.



Left Figure 1 – Citizen View of Government Service Provision in Canada, Source: Flumian, 2006.

In the run-up to the creation of Service Canada, a close cousin of Australia's Centrelink, most government officials believed there were no significant barriers to providing better service for citizens. To convince them of the need for a holistic service experience, service advocates began to map the multitude of programs and channels for service delivery by population groupings. The picture demonstrated why it was so difficult to create a holistic experience for the Murrays of the world.

Figure 1 maps the major government departments and discrete programs available to a disabled Ontarian.[12] The lines describe actual communication channels – mail, in-person, phone, internet – that reinforce government's siloed approach to helping a disabled person live a full life. Seeing this mapped out, it became clear to service advocates that policy outcomes were getting lost in implementation. This model is very expensive to operate and, organizationally, it depends on linear change happening sequentially in too many competing departments, agencies, and levels of government.

The 'spider diagram' immediately illustrated the problem for politicians. Senior leadership also championed the citizen-centred principle.

The web was a natural tool for building bridges between different agencies. Organizational structure became a more manageable problem because the "restructuring" was now happening virtually. Powerful search engines available from Google, Yahoo and others are producing information from various sources in a coherent display. Governments began to bundle services together so that someone who needed a service such as business registration would be able to find everything in one place. These 'one-stop shops' began to evolve into organizations tasked with joining up services across government departments, coordinating information on behalf of citizens. In the case of Service New Brunswick, one of the first movers, this bundling took place only at the front-end offices where services were provided by an individual who could draw together information and applications to complete the one-stop transaction. It would take longer for the back-end legacy systems to catch up.

Australia's Centrelink and Service Canada are good examples of this second wave approach.

The Second Wave of Citizen-Centred Service

Created in 1997 by then-Prime Minister John Howard, Australia's Centrelink was the first national 'one-stop shop' for government services. It was responsible for delivering welfare benefits and social security payments.

Centrelink pioneered the use of a 'multi-channel' approach to serving citizens. It focused its capacity to supply information and transactions either over the phone, in-person, or on-line.

In establishing Centrelink, the Howard government used the organizational approach to create dynamic tension between service providers and policy departments. It institutionalized this dynamic tension by putting all of Centrelink's funding into the hands of policy departments. Centrelink achieved major service improvements by managing its channels. It did not require significant investments in technology. Instead, it focused on transforming the front end of government service.

Service Canada: Relentless Focus on the Citizen

Building on lessons from such world leaders as the UK government, especially the department for Works and Pensions, Centrelink, and Singapore, in 2005, the Canadian government created a whole-of-government organization to deliver citizen-centred service (Figure 2).

CENTRELINK: PIONEERING MULTI-CHANNEL

Centrelink's annual budget is $2.3 billion (AUS) and it distributes approximately $63 billion in social security payments on behalf of policy departments. Centrelink:

- has 6.5 million customers, equaling approximately one-third of the Australian population
- pays 10 million individual entitlements each year and records 5.2 billion electronic customer transactions each year
- administers more than 140 different products and services for 25 government agencies
- employs more than 25 000 staff
- has more than 1 000 service delivery points ranging from large Customer Service Centres to small visiting services
- has significantly reduced the number of letters sent to its customers
- provides personalized services in over 80 languages
- receives more than 30.77 million telephone calls each year
- receives 47.2 million website page views each year
- grants more than 2.8 million new claims each year

In 2004, the Australian department of Human Services was created to provide direct, Cabinet-level oversight and accountability for the government's citizen-centred service delivery network. Having a Minister directly accountable for service delivery is enabling more effective relationships between service delivery and policy departments.

However, Australia would have to wait until 2006, when its e-government strategy report, "Responsive Government: A New Service Agenda," declared a vision "for a connected and responsive government." This document provided the overarching direction for citizen-centred service through all delivery channels, underpinned by fully integrated e-capability and supported by collaboration across government and the private sector.

In summary, the Centrelink example underscores the importance of having Cabinet-level leadership, a focus on the front-end of government, and a focus on the citizen. The Australians made action a priority: they just did it. From the start, Centrelink didn't depend on long planning horizons or get mired in issues related to information technology, shared services, e-government, or identity management and privacy. It was driven by political direction to improve citizen services and reduce costs. Combined with efforts currently underway in the Australian Government Information Management Office (AGIMO), Australia is now embracing a web 2.0 world which will provide an even more collaborative, integrated way for citizens and businesses to work with government and others to access services easily.

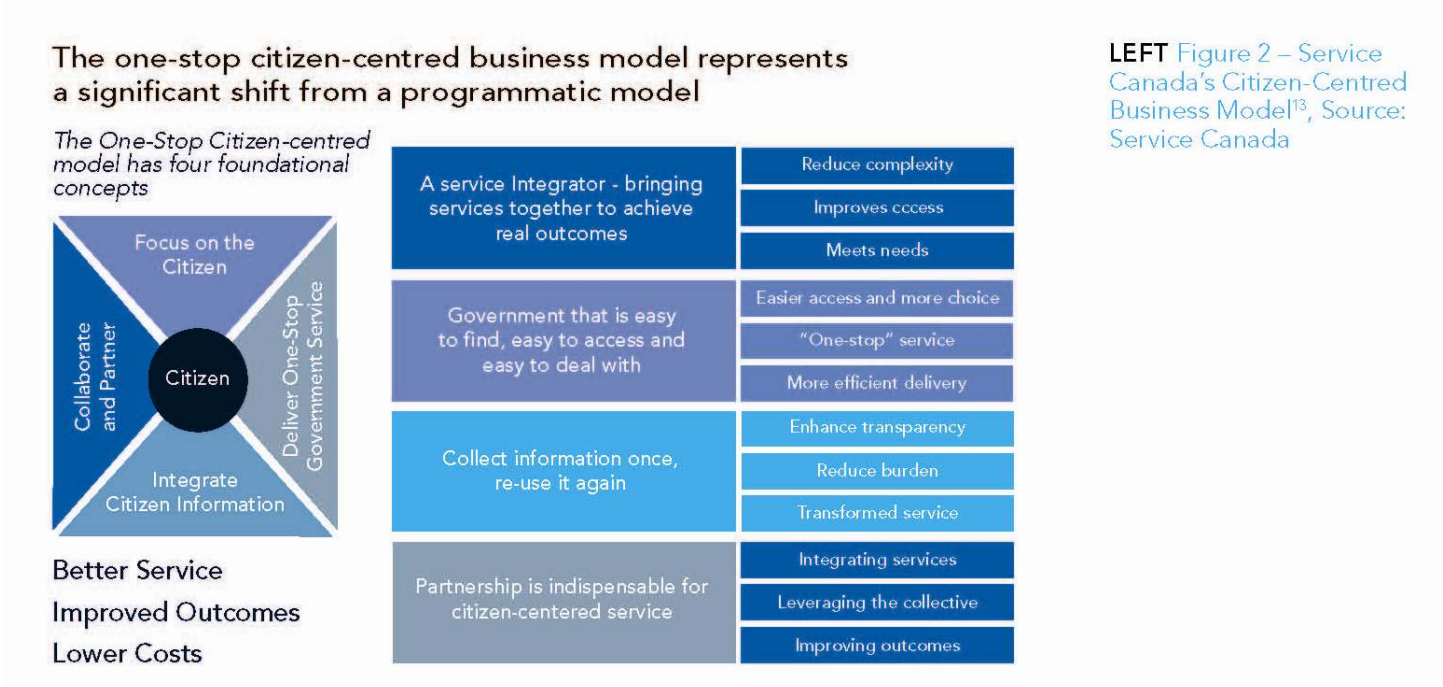
Joe Volpe, the Minister who oversaw the creation of Service Canada, recalls:

> The amount of preparation we did to get ready was phenomenal. It took two years of research of global best practices in both the public and private sectors. The research included everything from call centre consolidation to information collection to integrating service to client segmentation to office design. After that, we developed proof of concepts for what might work in a Canadian context. Only after learning from those experiences did we begin to reshape our business practices and behaviors to reshape both our front-end service experience and our supporting back-end shared services and processes simultaneously. As a minister, I had to balance innovation and risk. But I knew we weren't going anywhere if we didn't risk something.[14]

Four years of study, planning, and proof of concepts preceded the 2005 launch of Service Canada. Significant effort went into preparing the workforce. Service Canada College – the first public sector training organization of its kind – was established to help introduce staff to best practices for enhancing the service experience and achieving better outcomes.

Once Service Canada was launched, it was lauded by citizens and politicians alike. Reg Alcock, then President of the Treasury Board, Canada's central agency for expenditure and management, said:

> I was blown away by how fast it scaled. Twenty-two thousand employees hit the ground running. The improvements were obvious almost immediately. To ensure its success, we established a Committee of Cabinet to keep driving implementation. We understood pressure from the political level was necessary to get our departments working together.[15]



LEFT Figure 2 – Service Canada's Citizen-Centred Business Model[13], Source: Service Canada

Service Canada created a citizen-centred business model that broke the traditional programmatic structure and instead focused on developing, managing, and delivering services for citizens. It has successfully shifted away from an administrative, compliance-based culture to a professional service culture. It collaborated with other federal departments and levels of government to develop integrated and seamless services in partnership. It shifted to a more flexible and responsive service delivery infrastructure, experimenting with organizational structure, governance, and culture to allow services to be quickly introduced and changed.

TOWARDS SERVICE 2.0: DEALING WITH ACCOUNTABILITY AND ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Service Canada and Centrelink are benchmarks for coordinating and improving services for citizens. And yet silos still remain in both agencies, and doubters persist in government. Designing services that draw on the strengths of different agencies and/or governments and wrapping them effectively around a citizen like Murray continues to raise questions about accountability and issues of organizational structure.

First are the accountability questions: If a number of agencies are working together to deliver a service, who is ultimately accountable for the quality of that service? Is it enough for each agency to be accountable for its part? Or should there be an overseer accountable for the whole service? Which political leader gets to claim success, or be responsible for failure? Who is on the hook for costs? Who gets the savings?

From a citizen's perspective, none of these questions matter. From their point of view, government is one entity, and they expect it to act like one. But the flip side of that expectation is that when something government delivers goes wrong, citizens blame the entire entity – they don't distinguish among different agencies or service providers. For this reason, accountabilities matter. They define the traditional roles and responsibilities of politicians and public servants. As such, they are hard to change.

Second are the cultural and management issues: Different organizations have different capacities, work habits and norms. Making collaboration work means harmonizing different cultures, overcoming concerns about turf and shared risk, and finding ways to stay focused on a common goal and a common citizen. Managers and staff have been trained to work in their silos, so moving to working productively with other agencies is a real shift. Moreover, classic organizational hierarchies can slow down efforts to improve services for citizens. Layers upon layers of management approval processes stifle innovation. Good ideas can't get implemented quickly unless senior leadership creates an environment that values ideas at all levels of the organization.

Australia and Canada have shown that progress is possible through sustained leadership and learning by doing. But accountability and culture issues have evolved into an obsession with linking organizational structure to hard-wired accountabilities: an overwhelming focus on 'Who's in charge?' instead of 'What's the outcome?'. Public servants hide behind nineteenth-century models of organization and structure of government, waiting for political processes to resolve their perceived structural issues. Politicians are seldom equipped to leap over these hurdles to innovation. Without strong leadership focusing on the citizen, service transformation gets stuck.

To leap over these hurdles to innovation, we need a different approach. We need to look beyond our obsession with structure, and seek out the enablers of innovation. And with web 2.0, we now have the tools to do it.

MILLION DOLLAR MURRAY 2.0

Let's imagine a scenario where Million Dollar Murray is on the streets of D.C. today. What might happen?
Officer O'Bryan is new, but he's heard of Murray from his colleagues. Driving his cruiser down the streets of D.C., he spots someone who appears to be Murray asleep on a bench.

O'Bryan has a choice. He can either arrest Murray, put him in the drunk tank, and look forward to picking him up again a few days later, or do something different – connect with social services to find out what sort of care they might be able to offer. Out comes O'Bryan's PDA. Checking Google Maps, he's got the location of addiction services and homeless shelters in the area.

He even brings up a layer created by a local poverty advocacy group that has done ratings of those shelters. He sends a text message out to a Twitter group of community workers and police officers who are active on his beat. "I've got Murray here. Am thinking about taking him to Shephard's." "No good," comes the answer back

from the director at Shephard's, "We're full. Is the Salvation Army possible?"

The text comes in from the Salvation Army: "Yes. Space available." After easing him into the cruiser, O'Bryan pulls up Murray's police report, where he picks up the email address of Murray's case worker. He gets in touch, letting him know where Murray will be. An appreciative email comes back, with a link to a wiki page where a number of people from different agencies and community organizations who are concerned about Murray have been discussing what to do about him.

On the wiki page, participants are kicking around a few radical ideas – a local researcher has pointed to a pilot project in New York where the city is buying apartments for their most demanding and complex clients. People are wondering if the idea could work in D.C. For his part, O'Bryan isn't sure. But he adds the discussion to his 'watch list' to see how it progresses and forwards it on to the policy team back at Police HQ. He knows the Chief is interested in big ideas these days. Switching on the ignition, he chats with Murray and heads toward the shelter.

THE NEXT FRONTIER: THE CITIZEN AS PROSUMER

With the mainstream explosion of web 2.0 technology, service provision can be something other than the mass production exercise it has been since the founding of the welfare state.

Traditionally, governments design services and roll them out to citizens who are expected to comply with the terms and conditions of a program. Typically, the service is the same for everyone. It is always linear. Outputs are the metrics for the model: how many cheques got in the mail, how many people got back to work, how many calls got answered. Compliance with the service design's rules and regulations is paramount, especially in transactional services.

The new model of service is not a mass production machine. Instead, in a more holistic fashion, service is directly connected to outcomes. Enabled by powerful information systems and ongoing interactions that help build a profound understanding of service needs, service providers and service users collaborate to creating services together. They use the 'information ecosystem' created by Web 2.0 technologies to re-calibrate the relationship between service providers, service users and the evidence of service outcomes. Information fuels collaboration on the way to achieving a goal.

The 'citizen-collaborator' becomes a 'prosumer' of services, identifying needs and helping to shape their fulfillment. The technology and tools become a means of finding better ways to integrate service and balance the individual's preferences with his or her community's needs and resources. Prosumerism dramatically improves the responsiveness of public systems and keeps everyone involved – from officials, to stakeholders to citizens – focused on setting and achieving goals together.

This model is highly collaborative and demonstrates the changing role of government and the changing responsibilities of citizens. It also understands that collaborative partnerships can include members outside of governmental boundaries. D.C.'s example shows how the technology can help communities leapfrog into this space. Their use of a radically flexible infrastructure, embodied by Google's search and office application services, D.C.'s data warehouse, and DCPedia, has liberated information and knowledge within and outside the organization to create a platform for shared decision-making for the administration, its stakeholders and citizens.

Organizational structure continues to exist but barely matters in the achievement of outcomes. All the necessary information, talent, and knowledge are simply there, with a few keywords and a click on 'search'.

HABITAT JAM: A UN-LED MASS COLLABORATION

In 2006 the Canadian Government and UN Habitat partnered to host the World Urban Forum. Focused on sustainable cities, the global conference was to bring together leading practitioners, experts and officials from countries around the world.

Canada, through Minister for Housing and Homelessness Joe Fontana, wanted to use the internet to translate ideas to action to help address the world's most challenging urban issues democratically, without hierarchy, and include in the conversation people who would typically be excluded from such initiatives.

In partnership with IBM, the World Urban Forum Secretariat decided to take the conversation to the streets on a global scale. Through the courage and support of hundreds of organizations and individuals from around the world, the Habitat Jam broke down the barriers of language, literacy, disability, poverty, war and the digital divide to enable over 39,000 people from 158 countries to begin a conversation that some say will change the world.

Their conversation was to set the stage for the experts and officials at the conference in Vancouver.

The diversity of the 39,000 contributors was impressive. Slum-dwellers participated alongside government ministers, who participated alongside school children who participated alongside leading academics. The conversation ranged across issues of transportation, clean water, governance, poverty and other issues of importance to people living in cities – especially those who are poor.

In this new world, Murray avoids jail, gets the immediate help he needs, and inspires some big thinking about what might really help him over the long term. But Murray isn't much of a participant in this process. Are there other, real world examples of how a collaborative approach between service providers and users can make improvements?

Global prosumers: the citizens of UN Habitat Jam

But what if government wants to tap the power of mass collaboration? How could it set an agenda where others might join in, if they are invited?

In 2005, the Government of Canada and the UN habitat program joined forces with 39,000 people from 158 countries for Habitat Jam, a 72-hour facilitated online discussion about urban sustainability issues (see sidebar). One of the largest public consultation exercises ever attempted, the event proved that it is possible to reach out to thousands to discuss ideas that might lead to new and more effective policies and services. Indeed, these loosely distributed networks can coalesce to provide focused advice from those most affected by an issue, or those in the best position to take action.

Charles Kelly, Commissioner General for the Habitat Jam discovered "jamming" in an HBR article about IBM's ValuesJam, which included 300,000 employees in 160 countries:

"What impressed me was the focus on ideas to action. That is in essence what the World Urban Forum is about. This will be the first time that citizens of the world will have the opportunity, without the filters of national governments or repression, to state their points of view."[16]

Leaders of this pioneering experiment believed it would be the fastest way to innovation. A key challenge was to reach out and find novel ways to ensure that people living in slums would be included. Dialogue centres were set up in slums in Nairobi and New Delhi that connected slum dwellers with private sector and public officials in California, London and Brazil. Kelly observed: "In my opinion, in such dialogue the most important message is that you give trust to people to share whatever they want and you've got trust back in spades."[17]

Dr. Anna Tibaijuka, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Director of the UN Human Settlements Programme notes that:

"Kenya had the second-highest number of registrants participating in the Habitat Jam. The fact that thousands have been willing to patiently wait in line, sometimes for hours, in order to be able to contribute to this debate has been a profoundly moving experience for me. The fact that the debate on slums has moved from the academic world to streets … [is] itself a powerful signal to world leaders on the need for concerted action."[18]

The goal of the Jam was to get participants from cities around the world working on the most pressing urban problems. Six forums framed the most critical issues: improving the lives of people living in slums; sustainable access to water; environmental sustainability; finance and governance; safety and security; and, finally, humanity – the future of our cities. Anyone with something to say about their city was welcome to participate.

Joe Fontana, Canada's Minister of Housing and Homelessness, called it "an unbelievable learning experience":

"This was not a policy conference anymore. It was a gathering of practitioners from civil society and the private sector exploring these questions; what things have worked; what have we learned; what mistakes have we made and how do we do things better?"[19]

The Habitat Jam leveraged global networks to bring forward the experience and voices of people who would have never been able to attend the World Urban Forum. Their 'actionable ideas' were the starting point for the conference, which was designed to build networks that would carry their ideas into implementation through improved policies and services – at a global, national, and community level.

So the Jam helped set the agenda for the meeting. Even more remarkable is the number of actionable ideas from the Jam. More than 4,000 pages of discussion were captured; 600 ideas generated; and 70 actionable ideas researched and summarized in a workbook for the June 2006 meeting itself, when 14,000 people from around the world gathered in Vancouver.

Unfortunately, the Canadian government – the original champion of the Jam – could not follow through on its support (the government changed in early 2006), so much of the Jam's potential was left unfulfilled.

But the spirit of the Jam lives on. Bill Tipton, project manager for Hewlett Packard and contributing author at the Global Dialogue Centre, wrote about what it meant to him, as a blind person, to find the Habitat Jam: "This is so exciting it makes my hair stand up on end to see and talk with people with disabilities on-line."[20] Bill now leads an on-going dialogue with seventy disabled people from slums around the globe. He helps to raise money for services in these communities.

This is prosumption not just in terms of improving services, but in conceiving them. More and more of these conversations are helping set agendas that were not high priorities for national governments – think, for example, of climate change, hunger and Aids in Africa. Such issues now appear on governmental agendas because the public spoke up – everyone from rock stars to citizens to public officials to not-for-profits to those directly affected.

World leaders and governments will need to find ways to respond and participate in these discussions. They will face choices about whether to remain reactive or whether to find new ways of entering the conversation in proactive and productive ways that lead to better policy, services, and outcomes. The Habitat Jam is a great argument for taking the latter path.

Starting points for a services 2.0 strategy

While Government 2.0 is still in its infancy, and while there are still very few concrete service 2.0 innovations to draw on, a number of Web 2.0 concepts popularized in other sectors can help form a hypothesis on how they might work in the public sector. Perhaps the greatest opportunity is to use Web 2.0's new function-rich infrastructure to answer more creatively the question of "who does what". Public services no longer need to be provided by government alone; any combination of public agencies, the private sector, a community group, or citizens can provide them, using the Web to collaborate, innovate and engage.

What follows are a few ideas for getting started on your service 2.0 journey.

Rethink the single window. For over a decade, efforts to integrate disparate public services and information into convenient "citizen-centric" portals have fundamentally improved the efficiency and quality of services for citizens. But with the web bringing a "service window" into nearly every citizen's home and office, it might be time to consider offering government services and information via the net communities and websites where citizens spend their time online. Many of the most successful web 2.0 companies opt, for example, to syndicate their content and services widely rather than force users to visit their respective portals or homepages. You don't have to go to Google's homepage to use its search engine, and you can see flickr photos and YouTube videos all over the web. It's the online equivalent of home delivery: these companies are taking their services to the customer's online "home". In a public services context, this syndication strategy could be especially powerful for services that target particular segments of the population. Youth-oriented information and services could be made available through a Facebook application or services catering to new immigrants offered through ethnic portals. The FBI, and early adopter of this approach, syndicates its "most wanted list" by posting a widget that can be seamlessly installed on any public webpage so that individuals and organizations can help spread the word about these dangerous offenders. The widget automatically refreshes the information whenever the most wanted list changes, ensuring that only the most up-to-date information is in circulation.

Offer increased choice through service webs. In most public sector "marketplaces," governments maintain a monopoly on service provision and most services are one-size-fits-all. Even in the shift to e-government, many agencies have largely replicated physical world distribution systems on the Web, thus ignoring one of the most powerful implications of the Internet: the ability to create new forms of value by focusing on core competencies and partnering with others to accomplish non-core activities. By assembling networks of citizens, private firms, non-profit organizations and other agencies on a web-based platform, governments can offer greater innovation, choice and variety to their customers. In some areas, it might be worth going one step further and offering citizens a basket of services and products to "purchase" with their tax dollars, emphasizing choice in service venues, providers and options. Responding to public demand, the British National Health Service (NHS) recently implemented what it describes as a "dramatic expansion in patient choice." The introduction of free choice means, among other things, that patients referred to see a specialist can choose to be treated at any hospital – public or private – that meets NHS standards. Patient choice introduces an element of competition that should encourage poor facilities to improve as patients seek out practitioners in the best hospitals.

Enable genuine customization with MyGovernment pages. Personalized online space is not just for young people anymore: witness the rising popularity of sites such as MySpace and Facebook among Gen Xers and Boomers. While many government online offerings provide various levels of customized one-way communication, as of yet no government body has offered a truly customizable experience for citizens, despite offering hundreds of services to citizens of varying backgrounds, different ages, and with differing expectations. Web services, widgets, RSS, and other Web 2.0 technologies could help service providers satisfy citizens' expectations for customizable or personalized interactions with their government. Imagine, for example, that every citizen had their own MyGovernment page from birth – an interactive space through which they channeled all of their interactions with government, whether renewing a driver's license, filing taxes, finding a new doctor or registering a business. The service would actively anticipate their needs and deliver information to their platform of choice, including their desktops, mobiles or perhaps their favorite social media sites. The next step would be to move beyond mere transactions to enable citizens to provide feedback on their services and engage in policy debates with their peers and elected representatives through a truly interactive two-way window into government services and processes.

Leverage new channels for feedback. New web-based tools that improve the ability of organizations to gather and analyze feedback from their customers are emerging to support continuous innovation and improvement in public services. In many cases, third parties in the non-profit sector are running excellent customer feedback sites, suggesting that in some cases governments could readily tap into existing online communities rather than build their own. Initiatives such as www.fixmystreet.org in the U.K., for example, enable residents to submit concerns about safety, vandalism or other local issues directly to their municipal council. The site features a tracking mechanism that indicates whether local concerns (such as a pothole-riddled road) have been addressed by the relevant authorities. Set up by www.mysociety.org, the aim, according to its founders, is to "give people simple, tangible benefits in the civic and community aspects of their lives."[21] Using the site, British residents play a more active role in increasing public welfare, while helping local government officials identify issues in their jurisdiction. In the health care arena, the independent UK-based Patient Opinion site and the NHS's own "NHS Choices" platform allow patients to rate different hospitals and provide feedback on their experiences. Subsequent visitors benefit from the wealth of patient knowledge these sites help accumulate and the NHS can easily compare ratings across NHS facilities and pinpoint weaknesses in the system.

Create an Ideastorm. Governments can harness the power of prosumption by asking customers how to improve service quality. Dell Computer's IdeaStorm provides a useful template for government agencies. Launched on February 16, 2007, IdeaStorm (www.dellideastorm.com) looks and feels a lot like Digg.com, the popular technology news aggregator. Users post suggestions and the community votes; the most popular ideas rise to the top. The user-driven idea filtering process eases the burden on company resources by harnessing "the crowd" to sift through mountains of feedback. Less than a week after IdeaStorm's launch, users had contributed over 1,300 ideas that were voted on more than 120,000 times. Dell has already translated many of the ideas contributed by Dell customers into product and service innovations. CEO Michael Dell says he sees customer-driven innovation as the lynchpin of his strategy for Dell 2.0. "We need to think differently about the market and engage our customers in almost everything we do," he says. "It's a key to us regaining momentum as a technology industry leader." Public-sector service providers that aspire to Government 2.0 will need to empower their customers in a similar fashion.

Unleash your data. A growing chorus of observers (both inside and outside government) believe government's first priority in a Web 2.0 world should be to make its data available on the net in ways that are open, standards-compliant, and re-usable by third parties – whether they're individual citizens or commercial or non-profit organizations. The assumption is that third parties, less constrained by rigid internal bureaucracies and strict accountabilities, will innovate around the data far more quickly and freely than government can. Both governmental and non-governmental entities stand to benefit as a combination of Web 2.0 technologies (including XML, RSS feeds, and data visualization tools) makes governmental data available in attractive, bold graphic forms that anyone can understand and debate. Government agencies can employ these technologies internally, to improve inter-agency cooperation, reduce redundant activities, identify potential synergies between programs, empower larger portions of their workforces, and reduce operating costs. Having learned how to alter policy-making and evaluation processes based on these new sources of information and insight, they can then invite the public to use the tools, with comparable benefits. "Emergent behavior" can lead to new insights, innovations and strategies that even the smartest individuals couldn't produce in isolation. As James Surowieiki wrote in The Wisdom of Crowds, "If you put together a big enough and diverse enough group of people and ask them to 'make decisions affecting matters of general interest,' that group's decisions will, over time, be 'intellectually [superior] to the isolated individual,' no matter how smart or well-informed he is."[22]

Embrace open standards and web services. Leading governments are emulating their private sector counterparts and embracing the new standards, capabilities and architectures of web services. Most important, there's a change in mindset from thinking about enterprise applications only, to building an Enterprise Service Architecture (ESA) founded on web services, the new paradigm in software. Here, a single service platform enables and drives all applications so that internal or external users can access important services regardless of channel. Web services and an ESA reduce integration costs and dramatically speed application development, creating much more open, powerful and adaptable IT environments. With an Enterprise Service Architecture, governments have Net-based, standards-oriented, flexible software environments that can encompass information in structured and unstructured form, as well as in multivendor systems. This, in turn, provides the foundation for delivering high-quality services – such as education, health, and security – as an integrated ecosystem of providers (perhaps blending public and private services), not as a collection of hundreds of departments with incompatible systems.

Open a virtual service desk. The number of citizens participating in virtual worlds such as Second Life may be low, but it is not too early to experiment with virtual service desks in the medium. A number of agencies have already done so, citing the relatively low costs, the ability to reach young people and the desire to prove that governments are keeping pace with innovative uses of technology. The Fondazione Sistema Toscana, the official tourism foundation of Tuscany, is one of the first public sector organizations to exploit Second Life as a medium for tourism-related marketing and services. Its Second Life Toscana Island offers Second Life (SL) residents the ability to tour the Tower of Pisa, the Ponte Vecchio and the Duomo in Florence, with audio commentary available. At the U.S. Center for Disease Control's Island, users can watch videos and podcasts and use a slate of interactive and innovative tools to review educational information, while the U.S. National Library of Medicine (NLM) has established Health Info Island that houses a medical library and virtual hospital facility. The NLM will eventually provide SL residents with training, outreach, consumer health resources and one-on-one support. As Dr. Jay M. Bernhardt, director of the CDC's National Center for Health Marketing notes, "The goal is to bring public health information and interventions to consumers where, when and how they need them."[23]

Create a global division of labor. It may sound fanciful now, but it's possible that a citizen in the near future will source at least some of their public services globally, just as today's global corporate titans orchestrate complex value webs that draw knowledge, resources and talent from around the globe. Such a reality might make sense if there was a national comparative advantage in producing certain public goods. If Ireland excels at processing tax returns, for instance, why not send more of the world's filings there? Many people already elect to travel to India for open-heart surgery, where patients willing to spend money enjoy lower wait times for servcies that rival those provided by the best health care facilities in the US. Think of the possibilities: Las Vegas could distinguish itself as a world "center of excellence" in issuing marriage certificates! Of course, it would hardly make sense for all services to be sourced this way. No doubt national competition, cultural differences, issues of fairness and access, the complications of international tax transfers, and the desire for autonomy will ensure that some public services will always be most effectively and efficiently delivered at the local level.

THE CHALLENGE: COLLABORATING IN SERVICE DESIGN

Harnessing the power of mass collaboration is not just a matter of applying new tools to the same organization and the same services. Rather, it will come from re-evaluating what's possible – from looking at problems differently, approaching them differently, and creating the right organizational response.

Reaching the next frontier of service means opening up government officials, stakeholders and citizens to collaboration. Technology and tools enable productive dialogue. The array of tools – from blogs, to social networks, to wikis and beyond – will continue to evolve in their sophistication and application. They provide platforms for the collaboration that reshapes government.

Gilles Paquet, Professor Emeritus at the University of Ottawa, says this new order calls for a major shift towards "open-source governance,"[24] governance that enables each partner "to have access to the code and to tinker freely with the way the system works within a few well-accepted constraints". This is an environment which puts a premium on experimentation on evolving prototypes in order to improve by retooling, restructuring, and reframing.

Senior policy makers need to see how this tinkering can generate a leap forward in organizational performance and benefit to citizens and governments. By harnessing the power of mass collaboration, senior policy makers will become stewards of, and masters at, collaboration. They must be able to design effective collaboration into the

cultures, organizations, thinking, and services they manage.

Getting started

So how can they get started? What sort of ideas will help senior policy makers design mass collaboration into service?

To start, they need to know the seven basic principles of mass collaboration:

1. Realize mass collaboration is a condition of good service

Answers to the challenges posed by evolving citizen expectations for service delivery will not come from the top floor of a government office building. Instead, in-depth conversations with staff, stakeholders, service users, policy makers, not-for-profits, software providers, business strategists, and others will help link the right transactions together to create service that works for everyone.

2. Let citizens define the service

We need to think about service holistically, as steps in a journey:

a. Context is key – where people live, the daily choices they make, their friends and relations, how they socialize, how they like to live their lives. Look for organizations that are already in a position to help or have an important role to play, such as the role MySociety plays in the UK. These stakeholder groups become critical members of the 'service team.'

b. Imagine outcomes, not just outputs – what goal does the service facilitate? Delivering an employment insurance cheque is not the same as helping get someone back to work. Make sure implementation does not substitute for achievement. Link policy and service outcomes: the choices that the state has available to it are limited. There are competing priorities. Connect the service outcome with existing priorities, as well as costs and risks, to ensure the service creates the best pathway to success.

c. Don't waste time and money separating the front office from the back office: the industrial age model no longer applies! Shared services need to be understood in support of citizen-centered outcomes. What have traditionally been internal processes – such as procurement – are key to achieving the newer, more adaptive outcomes that are expected in this new paradigm.

3. Look beyond legacy systems

Rebuilding government from the ground up is too expensive, takes to long, and isn't necessary! Look beyond legacy replacement and towards extracting the necessary information into the most useful formats possible.

D.C. has done this with its use of Google. It has not spent millions 'joining up' mainframes or replacing them. Instead, it has made its content searchable and its data available in multiple formats that can be interpreted by multiple programs, including ones citizens commonly use. D.C. has also had to decipher what information is available to whom. Put some effort into this! Become stewards of who should access information.

4. Don't focus on organization and structure

In this new paradigm, organization and structure are like a pilot's view of roadways he sees while flying towards the horizon: guideposts from a different era of travel.

In a web 2.0 world, organizational structure is a necessary remnant of nineteenth-century society and production methods applied to government. We do not need to change it all – or perhaps very little of it – to actually make progress. Our horizon is improving government, its collaborative capacity, and its outcomes.

But recognize that these technologies are disruptive by nature. They will have unintended consequences. Watch for them and manage through them. Craigslist undermined the financial underpinning of the newspaper industry, which relied on advertising revenue to pay for news. In D.C., the unintended consequence may be that city governments, which are usually closer to their citizens, are the first to feel the pressure and to innovate. They may be innovating at a faster pace than other levels of government, further widening the gulf between citizens and those levels.

5. Share commitment

Collaboration has a cost. It means sharing responsibility for achieving goals, not just accountability for the proper functioning of individual silos. It holds every partner responsible involved in delivering a service accountable for their work: policy makers for their decision-making, front-line staff and partners for their performance and citizens for their role in making the most of the service and reporting back on its effectiveness.

Technology and tools are great enablers. Information systems like D.C.'s technology project 'stock market' can help enable this kind of accountability. Being transparent about performance information can help everyone concerned quickly adjust to new realities and learning.

6. Learn, iterate and innovate: Don't be afraid to fail

Failure speeds up learning. With platforms that are scalable and adaptable, improvements to the system can be spotted quickly and implemented quickly. Learning by doing means change is happening concurrently to achieve better outcomes. In this open-source thinking, the iterations snowball. In this fast-paced, non-linear, disruptive environment, trust is a foundation for innovating and learning.

7. Adopt, adapt and scale

D.C.'s use of YouTube, Google Apps, MediaWiki and other 'open' platforms shows us how emerging Web 2.0 technologies eliminate the need to 'build' applications. Open-source software and other applications are almost instantly available, useable and can be customized cheaply. Moreover, they can scale to incorporate millions of users very, very quickly. Don't build what already exists.

The examples in this paper all include these seven principles. To a greater or lesser degree the leadership behind these service transformations have all understood their power. Their work began at different times and evolved to different places. Some just did it; some planned it in excruciating detail. Some had the technology and enabling tools, and some did not. Some had deep knowledge of the structures and constraints of government and some were very new to them.

LEADERSHIP

The single biggest driver towards these horizons is leadership. As we've seen, political leadership and executive leadership are critical. And citizens are pushing us all.

New Brunswick's Frank McKenna saw the economic growth of his province holistically. He recognized that if he was going to create more entrepreneurship, he had to make it easier to start a business. Fixing government services to business thus became a key part of an overall strategy to get his province on the road to economic health. John Howard set the course for Centrelink. Tony Blair made service a top priority for his government. In Service Canada, political leadership lined up to drive change through a Cabinet committee focused on implementation. D.C. Mayor Adrian Fenty and Vivek Kundra continue to encourage their staff to drive new ideas from the bottom up.

Some will look at these examples and ask, 'where can we get that kind of leadership? How do we convince our leadership to head in this direction?'

By modeling the collaborative ethos of a Web 2.0 world in our own work, opportunities to launch change will arise. Small successes that can scale will help innovators lead by example. These can be simple steps: launch an internal wiki with staff, or reexamine an interaction with stakeholders that could be supported with the use of a Web 2.0 tool.

Taking small steps can unleash incredible amounts of creative energy. The real strategy behind Web 2.0 is empowerment and creativity across organizations and into society. For an educated, highly autonomous workforce and citizenry, the incentive to seize and run with this opportunity will likely be too good to pass up. Why be just an administrator when you can also be a change agent, a knowledge broker, or a project lead, all from your desktop?

And the vision of our future is no longer the issue. We know where we should be heading. We have the tools to get there. But it does take courage and so far, the pace of implementation is not keeping up with it. Web 2.0 provides us with the enabling tools.

There are challenges and risks to this approach. We will be forced to reckon with higher expectations, reel in employees that are too enthusiastic, and define new roles and responsibilities for people within government and for government itself.

Demographic factors are accelerating some of these tensions. Frank Graves, who has been examining the evolving role of governments in North America for twenty years, is emphatic on this point:

"The widening gulf between the boomer and post boomer cohorts is an unprecedented and profound phenomenon. One of the largest baby booms in history has exerted virtually uncontested hegemony of the economy and polity for twenty years. Yet large cracks are opening this integument as the frustrated Gen X and Y cohorts reveal growing impatience with an agenda steeped in boomer interests and values. With dramatically different demographics, attitudes to the state and orientations to technology we will undoubtedly see a transformation of the very foundations of the federal state over the next decade."[25]

The challenges will also be political. As we get more deeply into the possibilities of developing holistic, citizen-centred service, the question of how we link information together across government will become increasingly important. Without being able to recognize the needs of an individual and the transactions she has experienced on her journey, it will be hard for agencies to know how to help. Scaling up citizen-centred service, particularly in social

fields and healthcare, will depend on rapidly understanding who a person is, their previous interactions with the service, their preferences about what might happen next, and the outcome they are trying to achieve.

Managing information about people and their needs will be critical to enabling responsive, personalized services that invite collaboration between providers and users. For some, this is a controversial question. Issues of privacy, data security, and civil liberties are of major concern. Any approach to managing identity needs to be able to stand up to public scrutiny. The discussion is a significant one, and can't be dealt with substantively here. As we step into the future, societies are facing incredible challenges of complexity on a global scale. Sustaining societies and economies in the face of climate change, energy shortages, poverty, demographic shifts, and security will test the ingenuity of those who wish to see, do, and participate in the public good.

Governments cannot deal with these challenges alone. The knowledge and ability to deal with them is dispersed both within and beyond its walls. Mass collaboration has become a necessity, rather than an option. But governments are well-positioned. They have incredible power to draw together voices to make decisions together. Indeed, this is the essence of government's purpose: to reflect on and act for the common good. This ethos of public service combined with the capacity of the technology to draw together the energy and strength of all of us creates a massive opportunity for social and economic gain.

Let's remember Murray!

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25. Interview with Frank Graves, President, EKOS Research, conducted by Maryantonett Flumian, July 14, 2008.

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As the President of the Institute On Governance, **Maryantonett Flumian** is responsible for the development of the Institute's vision and strategic direction, project and partnership development, and the fostering of programs to promote public discussion of governance issues. She is a seasoned senior executive at the Deputy Minister level in the Canadian federal Public Service with more than 20 years of large-scale operational experience in the economic, social and federal/provincial domains. She is internationally recognized for her work as a transformational leader across many complex areas of public policy and administration such as labour markets, firearms, fisheries, and environmental issues. She was the first Deputy Minister of Service Canada. Her current research focuses on leadership, collaboration, governance, and the transformational potential of technology primarily in the area of citizen-centered services.