

m-business & m-government : co-operation. The Greek case study

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ABSTRACT

As e-Commerce matures and its tools and applications improve, greater attention is being given to improving the business of public institutions (national and local), and to exploring the potential of what is called e-Government.

e-Government is the use of Information Communication Technology to provide citizens and organizations with more convenient access to government information and services, and to deliver public services to citizens, business, and public sector partners. It is also an efficient and effective way of conducting business transactions with citizens and between government organisations. m-Government is simply e-government conducted in a wireless environment.

The rapidly increasing number of e-Government systems operating worldwide is perhaps the best indicator of acceptance of such systems, and the same is true of m-Government systems.

This paper presents the current needs of Greek companies to invest in the next generation of e-Business: m-Business. It seeks to present the importance of cooperation between e-Business and m-Business, which could play an important role in the more general development of e-Government. m-Government, in the authors' opinion, in association with the private sector, is a likely primary focus for the best of G2B in Europe.

The study presented in the paper was conducted by structured interviews with 15 private sector company managers who were interviewed using a structured questions list controlled by the interviewee.

KEYWORDS

m-business, m-government, investment, G2B, G2C

Introduction

The primary potential benefit of synchronous and wireless environments to public administrations in the knowledge economy is a substantial improvement in the efficiency and effectiveness of the delivery of public services. Additional benefits include enabling governments to be more “transparent” to citizens and business, by giving access to more of the information generated by government, and facilitating fundamental changes in the relationships between the citizens and the state. Nationally the technology has implications for the democratic process and the very structures of government.

Mobile government is the strategy, tactics, implementation and use of all kinds of wireless and mobile technologies, services, applications and devices for improving benefits to the parties involved in e-Government including citizens, businesses and all government units.

Public administration has in many areas already followed the developments of the market. But the modernisation of public administration is a cultural challenge for public sector management and workers alike. There exists a relation between the culture - structure - controls. Senior managers need to break this relation and to develop successful enterprising organisational models and apply them across the public sector. In this way the sector can become more flexible and democratic. The experience of private enterprises can really help in the modernisation of the public sector.

Crucially, the authors believe, m-Government applications will play an important role in business development of public sector organisations, only in association with private companies. The return on investment, according to private sector management, is likely to be positive.

From e-Business to m-Government: Greek Case Study - why m-business is required in Greece

Method

In order to shape an opinion structured questionnaires were created which helped us have a single base upon which we could make our considerations. Our research team interviewed 15 managers who in their turn completed the questionnaires we provided them. The questions used in the questionnaire were categorised into three basic fields:

1. Human Resources Management
2. E-commerce technologies and
3. User interface and service.

In order to capture further information, our research team recorded each interview, with the interviewee’s permission. The companies that participated in the survey can be categorized as following:

1. Business Unit Dot.com Companies and
2. Pure Dot.com Companies.

The type 1 companies adopt electronic commerce as a new part of their presence in the market and they consider it as an additional source of profit (e.g. Super Market Veropoulos), while the type 2 companies have electronic commerce as their one and only activity without having any other sources of profit (e.g. Dnhost.gr)

In the case study, knowledge was gained of the practices of both types of companies, which can better support the growth of e-commerce in Greece, and, as we argue below, as a result, in m-commerce. The questionnaire was divided into three parts.

1. The first part focused on human resource management issues relating to the existing e-commerce systems. The questions in the interview for this part of the questionnaire included as key words the following: personnel, e-commerce activities, internet penetration, experience of workers, working man-hours, methodologies of hiring personnel.
2. The second part of the survey examined the e-commerce technologies infrastructure. Keywords : business’s technology investment (hardware, software), logfiles statistics, user’s

behaviour modelling, .security policy, financial transactions, return of investment (ROI), future business plans.

3. In the third part of our questionnaire we tried to examine what kind of services each e-commerce system supports for the e-customer. Keywords: logistic policy, penetration of e-commerce.

Finally, we asked each manager to rank the above parts on a scale between {1,2,3} and to try to evaluate each part and estimate in approximation its benefits to the e-commerce system.

The private sector managers in Greece, interviewed for this paper, were invited to predict the future development of e-Commerce & m-Commerce applications. All agreed that m-Commerce was likely to prove a powerful marketing tool. 60% of the managers expressed the belief that the future of e-Commerce applications will be mobile commerce and in general mobile business (m-Commerce, m-Business). The need to develop systems capable of supporting m-Commerce applications is clear. 20% of the managers expressed the belief that improvements in management should be the next step. Finally 20% of the managers said that the improvement of the systems that already exist should take priority in the near future.

FUTURE PERSPECTIVE	PERCENTAGE %
m-business	60%
Management improvement	20%
e-commerce systems improvement	20%

Table 1 - Percentage of Managers pro m-business

There is a clear implication that the public sector needs to address m-Government if it is to keep up with developments in the private sector.

A beginning has been made. For example - the Mobile-Taxis service, which informs ratepayers regarding the settlement of their tax declaration of income. The main motive for this service is the fact that there is the huge response from citizens on the telephone line that deals with tax matters, and on the corresponding e-government services. Those who are interested in filling their tax declaration by using the mobile service can send an SMS in the M-taxis service, including the number of their tax record, and sending it to 2252. The cost is 0,5 euro. This cost includes all the costs of the SMS. From this registration the citizen ensures that he will be informed regarding tax obligations, and this will happen in real time and in a very convenient way - by receiving SMS messages from the M-taxis service. The service is supported by all the mobile carriers operating in Greece. This service is a new attempt by the Ministry of Economy and Public Management to improve its communication with Greek citizens.

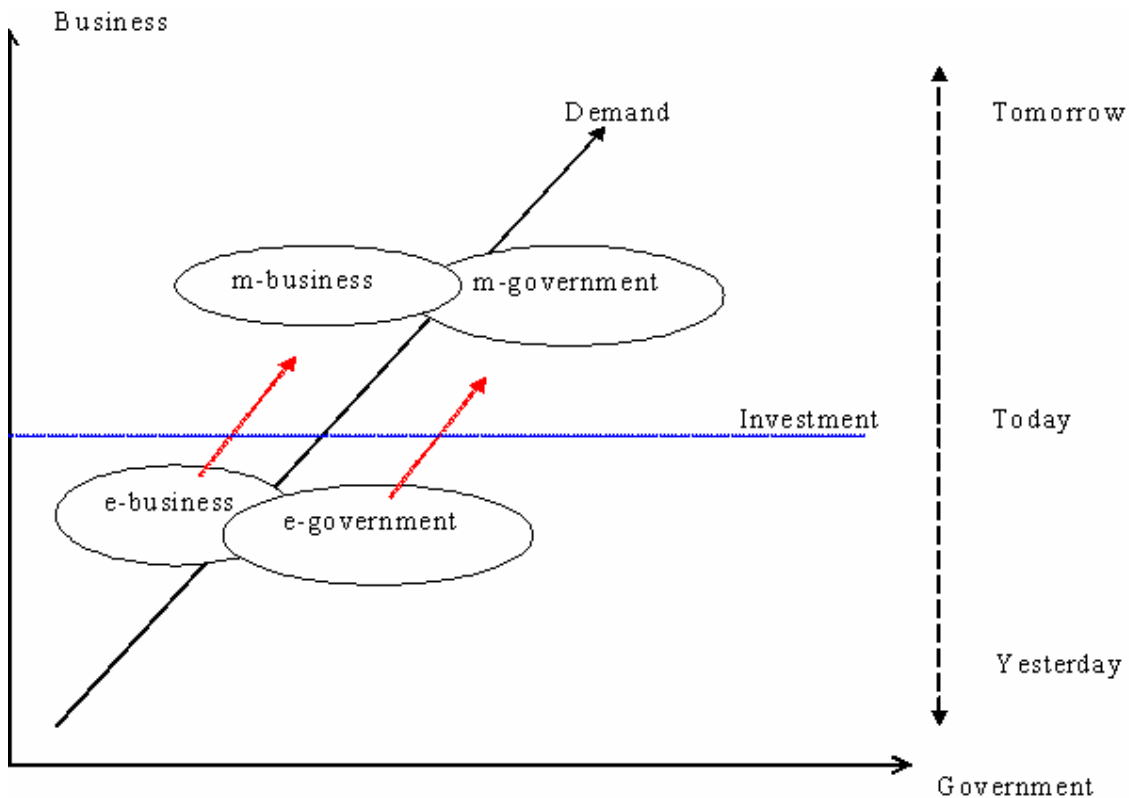


Figure 1 - Relationship between Business and Government

In this diagram we present the relation of Business and Government past, present and future. At present e-business is on the increase day by day. The same is true of the public sector. Investment in e-Government is almost as much as that in e-Business. In this way both administration and decision-making become as fast and efficient as each other across both sectors, bringing about simultaneous growth.

In the opinion of the authors, continuous demand for the growth of m-business will inevitably force the public sector to take the same direction. The simultaneous increase of demand leads the curve to shift to the right with the likely outcome of intense interest in B2G and G2B applications.

Business Unit companies have invested huge amounts of money in e-business technologies. It is clear that they consider that the investment in these technologies will increase the demand for services (as they consider that the e and at extension mobiles are alternative networks of promotion of products and services - B2G, G2B and G2C). Also the Return of Investment (ROI) so far is positive and the prospects of ensuring profit for the dot companies constitutes a unique source of profit while for the Business Unit companies these technologies promise an additional source of profit for them.

A certain preference in the strategy that the companies choose to follow does not exist. Each company has its own strategy. So, the preferred strategy of each company depends on the nature of the products that it produces or sells and the aims that it has. The investments lead in the enforcement of competition and the companies must follow specific strategies that will make them more competitive and more viable.

Greek consumers do not easily adapt to new electronic environments. The appropriate cultivation of attitude, idiosyncrasy and culture in Greece is little evidenced that would transform Greeks into e-customers (the oxymoron is that Greeks seem to be more willing to become m-customers). e-crime favours the pure dot com companies as they don't have physical base. Profit is easier to achieve for newcomers in the field. Newcomers often quite easily satisfy the appropriate conditions in order to be competitive and viable.

Current access to Information and Communication Technologies

In the following table we present general statistical data which depict the current access to Information and Communication Technologies in Greece, in first quarter of 2004. The data are a selection of those available by the end of the second quarter 2005 [6].

	Total	Contribution %
Households	3.324.647	100,0
Internet enabled mobile phone	772.847	23,3%
Other mobile phone	1.942.364	58,4%
Conventional analogue (terrestrial TV)	3.309.096	99,5%
TV Satellite dish	166.885	5,0%
Cable TV	-	-
Cable consol	195.125	5,9%
Personal Computer (laptop & desktop)	963.612	29,0%
Handheld Computer	21.862	0,7%

Table 2 - Access to Information and Communication Technologies first quarter 2004

Comparing the data of the previous year we can see that Greek citizens have already a good level of knowledge of ICT technologies. So that we can calculate the demand for the technologies it will be supposed we measure the infiltration of the ICT penetration. In the mobile environment the demand and the need is high. The sale of mobile telephones is average for Europe. Greece today is one from the best markets for the promotion of services in a mobile environment. This is owing to the culture of Greece as a highly communicative people. Thus mobility is an element which to help the enterprises (public and private) invests in such technology. Many services however are still at the pilot stage, whilst citizens get used to the novelty.

Conclusion.

Our research shows why mGovernment is needed in Greece and how telecoms access in Greece promotes m-Business and thus mGovernment. m-Business and m-government will play an increasingly important role in business development in both private and public sectors. Table 3 describes the status of public and private sector for future planning and technology adoption.

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