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## Web 2.0 and the Next Generation of Public Service

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Web 2.0 technologies and services have spread around the world at an amazing pace and are used by millions of people every day. Many public service organizations are also adopting Web 2.0 applications as a means of improving their ability to collaborate and serve citizens more effectively. But governments have an obligation to be good stewards of citizens' tax money—to implement new technologies responsibly and in a way that does not compromise privacy and security. The Accenture Public Service Value Governance Framework helps public service organizations deliver high performance by providing an important model for public service executives to use in evaluating Web 2.0 technologies in terms of their ability to generate positive social outcomes, to serve the common good, to engage the public as co-producers of public value and to improve accountability and transparency.



# Foreword



**Sean Shine**  
**Managing Director**  
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Today, Web 2.0 technologies are exciting everyone's imagination. Once only the purview of tech-savvy teenagers, applications such as Facebook, Twitter and others are gaining acceptance among a much wider audience. Businesses are increasingly leveraging Web 2.0 applications. Governments and public service agencies are also beginning to recognize the possibilities—encouraged, in part, by the successful use of social networking and instant communications tools by Barack Obama's campaign for the U.S. presidency.

Clearly, there is a future for Web 2.0 technologies in connecting agencies with their citizen constituencies, and in connecting citizens with each other to deliver timely information and better service. And yet, as always, governments must spend public money wisely—identifying intended results while mitigating risks. How can public service agencies filter out the hype? How can they arrive at a clear-headed view of the citizen outcomes that these applications and services can enable?

To help in addressing those questions, we recommend using the Accenture Public Service Value Governance Framework. The Accenture Institute for Public Service Value developed this model for more publicly engaged governance as a result of the Accenture Global Cities Forum, an ongoing public engagement study. The governance framework provides an evaluation structure that can help decision makers discern and articulate the value of Web 2.0 technologies in terms of how they contribute to the genuine engagement of people in their governance.

More specifically, the framework can help in evaluating Web 2.0 services in terms of four criteria:

1. The social and economic outcomes they can help to produce.
2. The balance they can provide between choice and flexibility on the one hand and fairness and common good on the other.
3. The manner in which they deliver higher levels of engagement—educating and enrolling the public as co-producers of public value.
4. Their capacity to create more accountability in government and to facilitate public recourse.

We believe this governance framework is a compelling way to think about and plan Web 2.0 applications that not only deliver services, but also produce public value and strengthen governance.

Indeed, Web 2.0 technologies should be of increasing interest because they support a broader evolution in public service: a new relationship with government that is about genuine engagement of people in their own governance. Web 2.0 uses exciting technologies, but it's important to remember that the technologies themselves are not what matters most. What matters is the potential for these technologies to break down silos, improve citizen service, unleash better collaboration

within and among agencies, and, foster broader participation by the citizens themselves.

In this new world, public service agencies have an opportunity and an obligation to explore the possibilities—identifying responsible yet innovative ways to continuously drive toward high performance.



**Sean Shine**  
**Managing Director**  
**Public Service, Systems**  
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# Web 2.0 comes of age



Several years ago, Google CEO Eric Schmidt took governments and government leaders around the world to task for being slow to embrace the social networking and collaborative communication technologies that, together, have come to be known as "Web 2.0."<sup>1</sup> A lot has happened since then.

For instance: the Swedish National Tax Board has co-hosted a seminar on Second Life. The Washington State Department of Transportation is using Twitter to provide traffic updates.<sup>2</sup> The French government has introduced a Web 2.0 portal featuring a forum, wikis and video to support debate on the

country's digital strategy and to encourage ideas from people other than the usual government voices.<sup>3</sup> A new US President was elected in 2008 in part by rallying his constituency through social networking technologies, including text messaging, blogs, Twitter and Facebook. Building on that success, President Obama's CIO Vivek Kundra is encouraging all federal agencies to employ Web 2.0 technologies to more effectively engage citizens.

As of early 2009, more than 500 IDs for government agencies worldwide are listed in a government Twitter directory.<sup>4</sup> The U.S. Congress is perhaps the biggest user of Twitter, but

Downing Street has an account, as well.<sup>5</sup> Many candidates for the European elections—from Ireland to Germany to France—are using a variety of social networking technologies to support their efforts.

Even as social networking applications reach greater numbers of politicians and agencies, one must ask if the traditionally risk-averse and top-down structure of public service organizations can readily accommodate something as potentially uncontrollable as the bottom-up power of Web 2.0. Some caution is certainly merited. Social networking applications have the potential to increase malicious

software and the presence of hackers. A more open and transparent information environment also carries risks of employees sharing protected or private information, deliberately or accidentally.

As a recent paper from Digital Communities puts it, "Most CIOs recognize that government should not be on the bleeding edge of adopting new technologies. Hard-won, expensive experience has shown that experimentation with taxpayer funds can end badly."<sup>6</sup>

### Evolution, not revolution

Beneath both the hype and the hope of Web 2.0 technologies lies a deeper understanding of these applications and services as something more evolutionary than revolutionary in nature. Accenture believes that Web 2.0 technologies are finding resonance among governments today because they are, in fact, supportive of a broader evolution in public service: a new relationship with government that is about genuine engagement of people in their own governance.

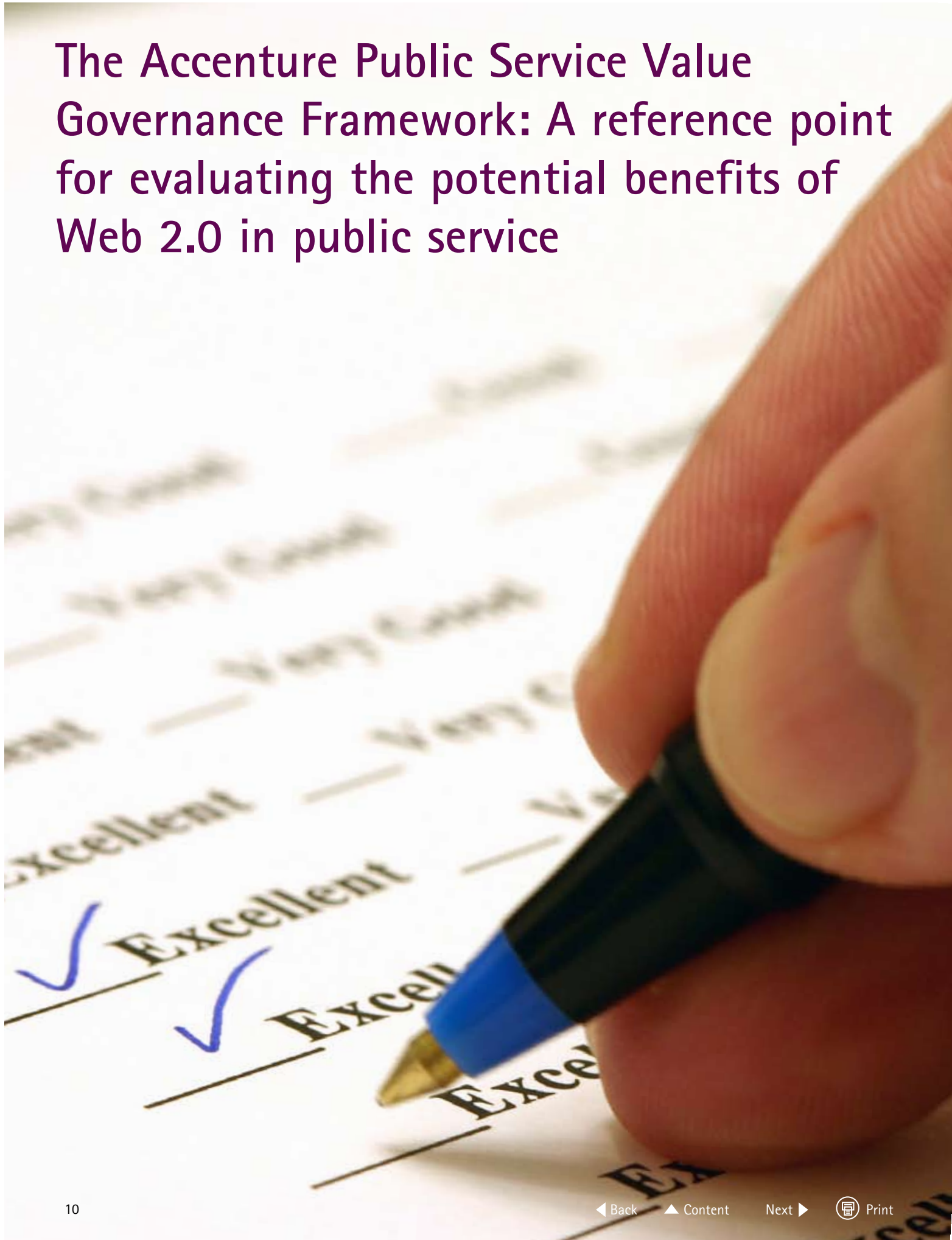
This reinvention of government breaks down silos, improves citizen service and opens up the possibilities of collaboration and broader participation among agencies and by citizens themselves. In effect, Web 2.0 represents another step in the inexorable move to more citizen-centric and participatory government. New citizen-sponsored governance initiatives led by electronic, online, mobile and social networking technologies are augmenting, but not replacing, the traditional controls and value of governments and public service agencies.

## Web 2.0: A broad set of potential benefits to public service organizations

Web 2.0 technologies have multiple kinds of value propositions. Here are several ways that Web 2.0 can deliver value to public service organizations:

- Enabling more effective social networking, citizen engagement and collaboration with the community.
- Providing rich Internet applications for the community—information and services that are more personalized, faster, easier to use and able to be delivered through multiple channels (such as Internet and phone).
- Enabling effective collaboration and teamwork—especially among disparate teams and across agencies.
- Providing a presentation development tool for internal staff that offers higher productivity than the Web alone can provide.

# The Accenture Public Service Value Governance Framework: A reference point for evaluating the potential benefits of Web 2.0 in public service



Web 2.0 is no longer a new phenomenon in the public sector. As we shall see, many public service organizations are already using or planning to use Web 2.0 technologies in their organizations for substantive government work and service to citizens. The discussion has evolved from the mere use of Web 2.0 technologies in the public sector to how Web 2.0 technologies can most effectively help public service organizations achieve their mission objectives and, ultimately, high performance. What is needed at this point in the evolution of Web 2.0 technologies and applications is an effective way to evaluate

potential Web 2.0 investments in the context of a proven framework for effective governance—one that helps assess potential advancements in citizen-centric governance against both costs and the inevitable risks that any new technology poses.

Such a framework is the Accenture Public Service Value Governance Framework. Derived from Accenture research and experience working with governments and agencies around the world, the framework provides a language and conceptual model with which to clearly articulate the value of Web 2.0 technologies in terms of how

they contribute to the genuine engagement of people in their governance. E-government is not merely about how to more effectively and efficiently use public services, vote in elections, answer surveys or pay taxes, as important as those activities are. The framework seeks to help public service agencies deliver services that simultaneously produce public value and strengthen governance.

In this paper, we discuss Web 2.0 technologies and applications in terms of their ability to deliver value and support better governance across the four key dimensions set forth in the Accenture framework (for more, see sidebar):

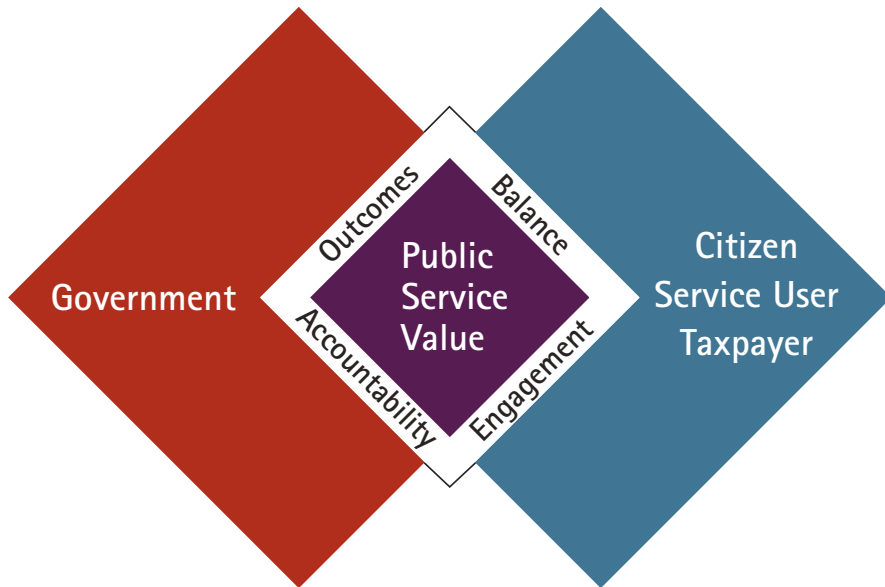
- Outcomes
- Balance
- Engagement
- Accountability

As already noted, there are a number of risks and drawbacks to Web 2.0 applications, including vital security, privacy and compliance issues. But with a solid vision and strong planning in place, Web 2.0 solutions can support a significant advancement toward high performance in public service, helping agencies increase accountability, engage citizens and improve social and economic outcomes.

## The Accenture Public Service Value Governance Framework

The Accenture Institute for Public Service Value has an ongoing research initiative called the Global Cities Forum, which involves a series of daylong citizen panels in cities around the world focused on exploring the role of government in improving the quality of life.

Based on analysis of the findings, Accenture has formulated what we believe to be a compelling model for a more active relationship between people and their governments. The Accenture



Public Service Value Governance Framework represents a more publicly engaged model of governance, one that truly connects people—as citizens, service users and taxpayers—with those whom they elect to lead them and to shape and direct their public services.

Derived from the common concerns and ambitions of all the groups of participants and the principles of public value they defined in the Global Cities Forums, the framework is built around four components:

1. Outcomes—Focusing on improved social and economic outcomes.
2. Balance—Balancing choice and flexibility with fairness and common good.
3. Engagement—Engaging, educating and enrolling the public as co-producers of public value.
4. Accountability—Clarifying accountability and facilitating public recourse.

These four components provide meaning and a language with which to clearly articulate a relationship that is about genuine engagement of people in their governance—not one that is merely about voting in

elections, answering surveys or paying taxes, as important as these things are. We consider this type of engagement critical to the ability of governments to achieve high performance.

For more information, visit [www.accenture.com/gcf](http://www.accenture.com/gcf).

# A focus on improved social and economic outcomes



The pressures for public service improvement have grown more forceful than ever because people have increasingly high expectations of government. Citizens are becoming more vocal about their needs and more sophisticated in their understanding of the interrelations between those needs. Conditioned by their experience with improvements in private sector goods and services, people expect better-targeted, more personalized, responsive and efficient public services. They are demanding more than higher-quality service transactions; they want government services to improve outcomes (the conditions of their lives) and to deal with pressing societal issues (such as the environment, poverty and public safety).

Many commentators have discussed at length the manner in which Web 2.0 technologies open up the organizations to innovation and continuous improvement in the way public service agencies serve their constituency. But 1,000 people coming together electronically to share ideas about a topic only vaguely defined or one without clear goals is hardly better than two people discussing the same matter. What governments cannot do—because it potentially squanders scarce public resources—is to begin with a certain technology or Web 2.0 application and then search for some use for that technology or application. The proper movement is exactly

the opposite. It begins with a firm sense of the agency's mission and the outcomes it wishes to develop or improve—and is followed by executive evaluation of what Web 2.0 services have the potential to help deliver that outcome at reasonable cost and risk.

Properly contextualized in this manner, these technologies and applications have great potential to improve social and economic outcomes. Consider the following examples.

### A new generation of eTax solutions

One of Accenture's revenue clients has had in place for more than five years an "eTax" solution—using a variety of online capabilities, including forms engines, to help citizens calculate and pay their taxes. Although the service has been quite popular and has reached more than 60 percent penetration among the part of the population that does not use a private tax agent, the agency realized that the service did not yet adequately help citizens cope with the complexity of tax laws.

Working with Accenture, the agency began thinking about a next-generation solution, in terms of how clients might wish to interact with a tool to provide them with more understanding of tax laws and how to deal with those laws. The value proposition that the team eventually developed was simple yet powerful: What if the eTax solution could more

effectively mimic the kind of services provided by an independent financial planner?

In the context of that desired outcome, Web 2.0 technologies presented a number of exciting opportunities. As Accenture Public Service Senior Executive Carl Ward puts it, "As we brainstormed about the benefits of Web 2.0 approaches to a next-generation eTax solution, we thought primarily about their ability to offer more personalization and a better interaction style. The agency needed a way to be able to ask clarifying questions of someone using the online service. For example, with a self-funded retiree, there are many questions a real financial planner would ask that would result in a different path forward than one taken by a student moving into the workforce or a young family just buying a house."

With Web 2.0 capabilities, intelligence could be baked into the service (or a live agent could be contacted in real time) to identify an individual's personal circumstances and the profile of previous returns and then start asking questions that would help the citizen to complete the tax return faster and more efficiently. These questions would also prompt a user to think about the life circumstances that might have changed in the 12 months since the last tax return.

## The power of collaboration and knowledge sharing

An often-noted value provided by Web 2.0 technologies is to increase the pool of "conversation partners" about a particular idea or topic. As one phrase has it, "all of us are smarter than any of us." But again, what specific outcomes does an agency seek from that capability—beyond simply creating a larger and potentially more raucous dialogue?

Consider the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, which in mid-2007 established a public blog about a potential influenza pandemic. The outcome sought by the department was access to experts in the area. The blog, in fact, did raise public awareness and created an influx of new thinking for the government about this important topic.

The [California Museum](#) has leveraged advanced wiki technologies and "crowd sourcing" to support the outcome of helping the state's teachers connect with their peers to develop innovative curricula and lesson plans, solve problems and vet ideas. What the museum calls an online "Teachers' Lounge" is powered by an asset called the Accenture Collaborative Innovation Solution. The "lounge" serves as a virtual space for mass collaboration. Teachers can seed an initial idea or send out a challenging question to the entire online community, which then collectively generates

diverse new ideas in response to that topic. The community also helps to evaluate and prioritize the set of ideas to quickly identify those that are believed to hold the most potential. It's an inherently "meritocratic" environment; peer review helps sift out ideas with less promise. The person who posed the original question or challenge for consideration by the community gets back a list of ideas that are inherently more actionable.

This type of Web 2.0 solution, already being used by a number of private sector organizations to manage the innovation process, is now being used by public service organizations such as the California Museum to create better outcomes for citizens by not only expanding the sphere of dialogue, but by bringing wider experience and knowledge to bear on ideas.

The California Museum has set out on a path to augment its physical environment with a "museum without walls." In late 2008, the museum launched California Legacy Trails, an interactive feature on its website that brings the state's history and culture to life online. Multiple digital paths are made available to users that highlight well-known, trailblazing Californians and how their innovative achievements have influenced the world. Users can also map and post their own personal legacy trails, which are then available for comment.

According to California Museum Executive Director Claudia French, "The California Museum is embracing technology to reach beyond our walls. We have launched a collaboration tool for our teachers and California Legacy Trails provides a rich, multimedia environment that supports learning about California no matter where you are."

## Improved analytics

Web 2.0 technologies can also support better analysis and identification of problems—which in turn can improve processes and service to citizens. For example, "mashups" are Web applications that combine data from more than one source into a single, integrated tool. One particularly valuable type of mashup uses geographic data to add location information to crime, vehicle accident and other reports. Mashups can also provide greater location information about where the need for social service programs may be greatest based on current requests for assistance. Information from program databases can be displayed on a map—giving policymakers and community members a much more complete picture of their community and its needs.

One important example of the power of mashups came during the devastating California wildfires in 2007. During that period, mashups were used extensively by the state to provide informational maps of areas affected by the fire.

The applications dramatically improved the state's disaster-management capabilities.

### Employee collaboration and performance

Better collaboration inside an agency or organization is also a benefit of Web 2.0 technologies, if channeled toward an identifiable and valuable outcome. When supported by other collaboration technologies, internal government social networking sites can dramatically improve the efficiency and effectiveness of cross-government cooperation. In the United States, for example, GovLoop is an internal government social networking site that connects over 9,000 federal, state and local government employees, academics and contractors. GovLoop uses Web 2.0 technologies to enable cross-government collaboration and innovation by encouraging people involved in the delivery of public services to share ideas, explore opportunities and debate and discuss issues facing government.

One type of public service organization that is more outcome-focused than many others is the military. Warfighters, first responders and the agencies that support them need a reliable, real-time operating picture of activity in the battle space or disaster area. The outcome sought—mission success—requires collecting, sharing and analyzing

information among teams across the chain of command and with other agencies in real time for informed action and rapid response. Web 2.0 technologies in this context can deliver immense, even life-saving value.

For example, the [Accenture Patrol Collaboration Tool](#) is an innovative software solution specifically designed to meet the needs of today's ground-based military troops and troop-support organizations. This unique tool helps warfighters and first responders assess a situation, predict trouble spots, react to unforeseen events and marshal the right resources quickly.

The tool is driven by user input and needs—in effect, turning every user into a sensor and then rolling them into a picture of the immediate environment where the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. Ground-based teams can easily capture text, photographs and video of a specific geographical area before, during and after a patrol. These “events” are automatically tagged with ge positioning data from the embedded Global Positioning System device. Information is secured and transmitted to a larger repository of patrol events, places and people that can be shared with authorized users on the ground and in user-support organizations. The data can be updated and analyzed for an increasingly complete and useful picture of a specific

geographic environment, supporting successful execution of a mission.

### Openness to positive, unintended outcomes

A final word about outcomes-focused Web 2.0 innovations: public service agencies must be driven, but not constricted, by outcomes. In other words, having a particular outcome in mind should not blind one to unintended and often unforeseen developments that are part of the nature of the Web 2.0 world. The Washington State Department of Transportation's use of Twitter is one interesting example of Web 2.0 benefits that exceeded the organization's original vision.

Originally, the department's Twitter feed—providing traffic alerts, information about automobile accidents, as well as route changes for ferries—was conceived as delivering on an outcome of providing additional channels of information and valuable mobile information capabilities to citizens. What the department discovered eventually, however, was that the additional channel eased the load on its Web servers. During emergencies, such as major snowstorms or other weather events, the website often could not handle spikes in user traffic, temporarily bringing down the system. The Twitter feed has eased Web congestion and now supports an additional outcome for the state: continuity of operations.<sup>7</sup>

# Balancing choice and flexibility with fairness and common good



Accenture research has found that people increasingly believe that governments should tailor service provision to meet the wide range of different needs across the population. People are increasingly accustomed to private sector services that respond flexibly and discriminatingly to their individual demands and see little reason why government cannot do the same. However, as applied in practice, this greater choice has the potential to be misused by those with more knowledge about how to "work the system." Thus, narrow or unconsidered applications of "fairness" and "choice"—providing open enrollment to schools for everyone and not just for those in the immediate local area, for example—can actually widen gaps between those who are able to take advantage of the benefits of greater choice and those who are not.

This is an important insight into some of the unintended consequences of the customer-oriented public service reforms under way in many countries. As service users, people do want more choice in the type and means of service delivery: better public transport and improved roads, services available in person and online, wider choice of schools and doctors, and more convenient service hours. They also generally want that for everyone but know that without support, some people—those who are not as

highly skilled or educated or as highly equipped because of lack of income—will be unable to exercise choice and thus will be comparatively worse off as a result.

The task of balancing choice and flexibility with fairness and the common good is fundamentally about the sound management of tradeoffs, which requires clear understanding of individual interests and their impact on the common good. Of course, many see an inherent contradiction in all this because treating everyone equally usually means giving everyone the same access to services. One resolution to this seeming conflict lies in focusing on equality of outcomes—ensuring that different types and channels of service provision allow different types of people the opportunity to experience similar social and economic conditions, or at least similar improvements in those conditions.

### The equalizing effect of Web 2.0

This equalizing effect is one of the outcomes delivered by expert blogs and wikis. It is becoming increasingly difficult to hoard information—a tactic that has often been used and misused by people to create an advantage for themselves over others. Difficult and expensive advice or ideas can now be found more readily, often for free. Certainly there is also a great deal of misinformation in cyberspace and in social

networking communities, and public service agencies must be attuned to those associated risks. But wikis and other crowd-sourcing techniques offer significant opportunities to balance choice with fairness and the common good.

It is this aspect of this desired balance—the provision of different types and channels for information and interaction—that Web 2.0 technologies deliver on extraordinarily well. On the one hand, Web 2.0 applications make the same kinds of resources available to everyone. On the other hand, they provide different kinds of access and different combinations of services depending on what people want and how they prefer to interact with the government and with each other. Services can be tailored to different needs and styles of interaction. Web 2.0 applications can also help those who may have difficulty gaining access to public services through traditional means.

## More than a "one-size-fits-all" solution

Consider once again the next-generation eTax example cited earlier. At the heart of the agency's vision for a Web 2.0-enabled eTax service is the notion that citizens will now receive more than a "one-size-fits-all" solution. Instead of providing the same generic service or the same information resource for everyone, the agency seeks to move to a new level of service where it serves as more of a financial planner for individuals.

If public service providers are to more consistently deliver on the promise of balancing equality and flexibility, they must strive to become better informed about what the people they serve want and need. Then they must put in place differentiated services and service delivery mechanisms that are responsive, connected and aligned to those wants and needs.

## Value-based segmentation

Value-based customer segmentation has now become much more common in the private sector; governments, too, need to understand their "customers" by undertaking detailed, needs-based, customer segmentation studies, recognizing that these needs will vary across different customer segments and, indeed, individual customers. Then, they must respond by targeting services—and therefore resources—appropriately,

ensuring that those who have the greatest need receive the most help and those who are most able to help themselves have the opportunities and means to do so.

These actions will enable governments to more effectively balance the desirability of offering people choices and personalized services on the one hand, and the necessity of achieving more equal and universal social outcomes cost-effectively on the other.

Customer insight and segmentation can be used to target greater customer service resources at those most in need, or most at risk, such as those at risk of underclaiming on their benefit entitlement, or of being out of compliance with regulations or of being socially excluded. Customer segmentation also allows governments to consider adopting a lighter-touch, self-service model—using electronic channels, for instance—for people whom they have identified as being less needy or less at risk. The cost savings can then be used to maintain a more supportive customer service model—mainly face-to-face and phone contact—for those with greater needs.

## Differentiated service

An example of a service that especially supports citizens in need is the "Online Life Coach" under development at Accenture. As described by David McCurley, director of the Accenture Human Services industry group, the online life coach provides a valuable resource to human services agencies and their constituencies. "The idea of the 'life coach' is to assist a person or a family that has been through some sort of life-altering circumstances—the loss of a job, perhaps, or a home fire or death of the family's primary breadwinner. The online life coach takes the specific information provided by these people or families and walks them through various alternatives, resources and ideas they can be thinking about."

Depending on a person's short-term and long-term goals, the online life coach provides advice about reaching those goals and points the person toward resources in support of good outcomes. So a person who has recently become unemployed, for example, receives guidance about job opportunities, retraining, child care requirements, public transportation and so forth.

Another example of differentiated services enabled by better customer segmentation comes from the Ministry of Labour and Citizens' Services in the province of

British Columbia, Canada. The ministry, in partnership with the Ministry of Attorney General, recently conducted extensive, needs-based segmentation in its large and growing new immigrant population to understand better and respond to that group's range of needs. Then it worked extensively with immigrant advocates and community groups to develop the WelcomeBC portal ([www.welcomebc.ca](http://www.welcomebc.ca)). This portal is organized by broad customer segments (temporary workers, international students and so on) according to specific needs (for instance, Choose BC, Come to BC, Settle in BC, Enjoy BC, Diversity in BC and Regions in BC) and offers services in several languages.

Access to health care is, of course, a topic of paramount interest around the world. Although no technology can or should completely replace a physician's care, Web 2.0 applications can often help provide citizens with some assurance about a particular health condition or can alert them to the urgency of finding care. In the United Kingdom, "NHS Direct" is an interactive, online health service that helps citizens in a number of ways: by providing a self-help guide, delivering advice on particularly timely health issues (for example, on treatments during the flu season) and answering both common and specific questions about health issues and available services.

One blogger to a national health site recently commented that he was facing a situation where there was a three-week wait to see his general physician. "So now I use NHS Direct and diagnose myself online. So far it has worked fine for me." Again, this is not the final or best answer for cost-effective health care but it is an example of how Web 2.0 applications can provide services that augment limited sets of services or that serve as a stopgap until experts are available.

As these examples indicate, a lot of good thinking is going on with regard to how Web 2.0 technologies can help governments balance choice and flexibility with fairness and the common good. However, this is also the least developed area of e-governance at this point, and could be an important focus for Web 2.0 innovators in public service.

# Engaging, educating and enrolling the public as co-producers of public value



Governments around the world are making greater efforts to engage people, though some of those efforts remain more superficial than substantive. Citizens want their government to offer more opportunities to involve them in setting priorities and plans for public services to deliver improvements in their own lives. Moreover, they want to be able to do this on an ongoing basis—not simply through rare public consultations or superficial user satisfaction surveys.

Many governments have made strong attempts at greater citizen engagement. London and New South Wales have long-standing traditions of wide citizen consultation, with the former recently developing the format of citizen juries to discuss public policy issues. Los Angeles is experimenting with grassroots neighborhood councils. And even in Berlin and Paris, where citizen consultation has not been given great emphasis historically, moves are now under way to engage the public more actively.

However, engagement must go beyond asking people what they want. It must also include active programs of educating people about their rights and responsibilities and initiatives to enroll them as active partners in improving outcomes—from promoting individual preventative measures, such as consuming a better diet, to encouraging more active community participation or volunteering, such as organizing environmental clean-up activities or establishing neighborhood safety teams.

## The power to engage citizens

Web 2.0 technologies have a unique power to engage citizens and create a common community of purpose coming together to solve problems and discover innovative approaches to older ideas. Examples of such applications in the public sector grow almost by the day.

For example, the U.S. Small Business Administration holds monthly live Web chats with industry leaders and successful entrepreneurs as a way to engage business owners and aspiring entrepreneurs in a national dialogue about the issues that matter to them most.

The state government in Finland maintains an electronic discussion forum ([Otakantaa.fi](http://Otakantaa.fi)) that enables citizens to comment on administrative initiatives that are being launched or are already under way. People can use a message board or connect directly with ministers for online chat. The goal of the Finnish government is to create a strategy for comprehensive electronic participation by citizens, including introducing a systematic electronic hearing into public preparation processes and using tools like eVoting and electronic submission of motions.

## The power to listen and to educate

Certainly a primary goal of Web 2.0 technologies is to improve the manner in which citizen voices are heard. At the same time, communication works in multiple directions, and government agencies are finding blogs and other social networking applications can help them educate citizens about the government's point of view on a particular matter, or can give citizens insights into how such "official" thinking is evolving. For example the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) created a blog in response to the intense public debate around the now–defeated Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act. The blog allowed members of the public to air their views, but also gave DHS officials a forum to disseminate their own views on the immigration issue.

The educational value of Web 2.0 applications can be seen in a couple of interesting applications that have engaged citizens in understanding the hard tradeoffs necessary in public service. One example is from Barnet Council in the United Kingdom. They offer a citizen portal with an online budget simulator application. With the online simulator, citizens perform "what-if" analyses—increasing or decreasing the amount of money being spent on each council service and seeing the impact those changes would have on

the increase needed in taxes. The application helps citizens understand the tradeoffs necessary to budget for and administer public services.

A similar outcome is delivered from an innovative application from Accenture called [Spending Public Money](#). This online experience lets the public weigh in about the choices government should make in providing public services. The tool asks users to think about the kinds of public services they want for themselves, their family and community within a limited amount of public money. Participants are asked to allocate that money toward improvements in education, safety and transport, making tradeoffs where necessary to try to optimize the outcomes produced. Developed by the Accenture Institute for Public Service Value, this online experience is part of an ongoing research study to discover what people expect from their governments.

Citizen engagement is most effective when the participation sought is not just to comment on a service already in existence, but on services still in the planning stage. In this way, citizens truly participate in the shaping of the services and the manner in which they are implemented. For example, the Swedish National Tax Board launched a blog to engage its users in developing its services. The board has also been evaluating how it can



provide customer-oriented proactive communication using virtual communities. As noted earlier, the board cooperated with the Stockholm School of Economics to host a seminar on the school's virtual island in Second Life.

### Education through entertainment

Some creative public service agencies are leveraging Web 2.0 platforms as a way to entertain their constituencies—while reinforcing an educational message. [The Virginia Department of Taxation](#) is actually posting short, humorous videos on YouTube starring a puppet mouse named "Phil" who

encourages taxpayers to file online. If your presumption is that a tax agency doesn't have a sense of humor, check out [Subterranean Paper Filing Blues](#), with a pretty mean Bob Dylan imitation in the background song, and lyrics that manage to rhyme "Use the Web, it's 2-point-oh" and "Don't use paper, it's too slow."

# Clarifying accountability and facilitating public recourse

Citizens are demanding more information, clearer information and greater accountability from government. This is especially important with regard to tax expenditure, where the absence of easily accessible information fuels perceptions of waste and inefficiency, and has the potential to undermine public trust.

Accountability in government means at least a couple of things. First, it means that public service agencies are accountable for how they spend the citizens' money—meaning they have an obligation to be as efficient as they can and to cut costs wherever possible. Accountability also means improving transparency and involvement of citizens in how money is spent. Web 2.0 technologies help deliver both of these aspects of accountability. By creating more widespread participation in the conversation of governance, greater transparency is achieved, giving people a better way to hold government accountable.

### Improving transparency

There are numerous examples of innovative online and mobile applications that improve transparency in government. The [Missouri Accountability Portal](#) (MAP), for example, provides citizens with a single point of reference to review how their tax money is being spent and other pertinent information related to the enforcement of government programs. As users

browse the MAP site, they are able to view information about state agency expenditures, distribution of economic development tax credits and state employee pay information.

In New York City, as part of its [Citywide Performance Reporting](#) project, officials set out to develop a robust set of enterprise business intelligence tools to help measure and manage performance across its many agencies. Accenture helped the city implement Oracle Business Intelligence Enterprise Edition and developed a common data warehouse to use across all city agencies for performance management analysis.

The [solution](#) provides four dashboards from which users can access reports designed to address the city's overall performance management, customer service and service delivery. In addition, reporting models support more detailed analysis. Since launch, the city has expanded the performance reporting capabilities with additional citywide, agency and program-specific dashboards. The city has also integrated geographic information system analysis tools to display service request information on a map to increase the analytics data available to the public.

Twitter and other similar applications can also help drive transparency in government. For example, the Office of the Rhode Island General Treasurer is using

Twitter to broadcast the state's daily cash flow on a real-time basis. The cash-flow information becomes one measure of Rhode Island's financial health. Each day's publication or "[tweet](#)" highlights the gross revenues and expenditures of the general fund.

According to the General Treasurer Frank T. Caprio, "When I took office I promised to make government more transparent and accountable through the use of new technology. As we look forward, it's important that government find innovative ways to use existing technology to communicate with the public and increase government transparency. Utilizing Twitter is the next step."<sup>8</sup>

Another example comes from the U.S. state of Kentucky. Its [Open Door](#) application is a Web-based financial transparency and accountability tool that enables citizens to access detailed financial information, view such information graphically and then access a training and education component if desired. The success of this tool is the result of an extensive consultation and engagement process that allowed government to collect citizen feedback on the design and functionality of the site prior to its launch in early 2009.

The site includes an easy-to-navigate home page where citizens can access financial data about the state in a user-friendly manner. It also offers a fully interactive kids'

section that utilizes games, cartoons and interactive lessons on budgets and government finance. Other searchable sections allow citizens to drill down into government expenditures, revenues, vendors and contracts.

In New York City, Accenture teamed with the city's Department of Information Technology and Telecommunications, as well as the Mayor's Office of Operations, to develop a [Stimulus Tracker](#). With this online tool, New Yorkers can monitor the city's use of federal stimulus and recovery funds provided through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA). The solution also includes an interactive map showing the location of New York City projects and programs receiving direct or displaced stimulus funds.

The first phase of the solution has been launched on the [city's website](#). It enables the initial visibility to the funding at a category, subcategory and project level for capital projects. The second phase will contain additional information regarding non-capital projects and a more comprehensive view on the current allocation and status of funds across the city.

As the city's website notes, the Stimulus Tracker was explicitly designed "to ensure the highest levels of accountability concerning the use of stimulus/recovery funds." According to New York City Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg, "New Yorkers want major investments in infrastructure, but they want to know their money is being spent wisely. We've made all city stimulus spending available online, so the public can hold city government accountable for the efficient and cost-effective use of stimulus dollars."<sup>9</sup>

One of the largest-scale initiatives to establish transparency of government operations is [Recovery.gov](#), established by the Obama administration in the United States in the wake of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, enacted to respond to the global economic crisis. Given the extraordinary expenditures represented by this bill, the website provides a number of tools that enable citizens to monitor how money is being spent and what

results are being achieved. The site already contains basic information, as well as a public forum for citizen commentary. Eventually the site will enable citizens to peruse data to assess progress of the initiative.

### Opportunities to reduce costs and improve efficiency

Accountability is also served by Web 2.0 applications by delivering greater efficiencies and cost reductions. Web 2.0 applications offer opportunities to reduce costs to serve by making more processes electronic (reducing costs per transaction) and by encouraging self-service through social networking.

One example: [Altinn](#), a platform offered by the Norwegian government and delivered in collaboration with Accenture, is intended to help increase collaboration and electronic dialogue for both citizen to government and business to government. The platform was originally driven by the Norway Tax Agency, but was built so that all public service agencies in Norway could connect to the solution and put their e-government applications on the platform. The platform was also designed to handle individual transactions, such as tax returns for citizens.

Based on this success, the government of Norway has embarked on a second-generation platform, called Altinn 2. The vision: a new,

common platform and single point of contact for businesses and citizens for interaction with the government. It will provide the technical means for businesses to interface directly with the services and to their accounting systems so they can do more efficient reporting. Altinn 2 will also be a portal channel for interactive usage by citizens.

The platform accomplishes both increased transparency and improved efficiency. That is, all information is now available consistently to all users. In addition, the platform streamlines and reduces costs for businesses. For example, in the past, businesses have been forced to report data about their employees to a number of agencies in different formats. With Altinn 2, such intelligence will be built into the application itself. This automation offloads low-value work from more costly resources.

### Breaking down silos

The improved collaboration capabilities delivered by Web 2.0 technologies also deliver efficiencies by breaking down silos. Wikis or similar tools, such as Microsoft's SharePoint, can help to standardize business processes, functions and terms across an entire government organization. An important example of the power of such collaboration comes from Australian Customs. There, in collaboration with Accenture, the department has built a

tool that brings together three groups that must deliver a successful outcome, but which often have different training and mindsets and, therefore, may not effectively communicate with each other.

One group assesses broad risks from the import of cargo into Australia. Another group takes those risks and translates them using intelligence into more specifics about how and whom to monitor. A third group comprises the frontline people who inspect the containers based on the risks and the intelligence information. The collaboration tool offers a variety of applications including wikis, discussion boards and chat capabilities that are improving the manner in which the teams work together, but also improving processes and, more important, the ability to fulfill the teams' common mission to protect citizens.

Another example of using Web 2.0 technologies to break down traditional silos in government comes from New Zealand, where the national government has developed something it calls the Government Shared Workspace—a suite of online tools that supports information sharing and working between government agencies. A common, secure platform to support these tools has been built and is operated by the State Services Commission on behalf of agencies. It supports interagency collaboration, enables secure sharing of

information and allows specialist groups and networks to share expertise, experience and good practices.

Use of the workspace has grown significantly since its introduction in late 2004. It now supports about 250 workspaces used by more than 5,000 staff from about 50 agencies (including district health boards and local authorities). The workspaces are currently being upgraded to incorporate blogging and wiki capabilities.

# Overcoming the obstacles



As the Web 2.0 solutions and applications discussed here show, public service agencies are already delivering innovations based on Web 2.0 technologies that are improving citizens' lives and their active participation in their own governance. Nevertheless, a number of obstacles and risks currently stand in the way of broader development of such solutions. These include:

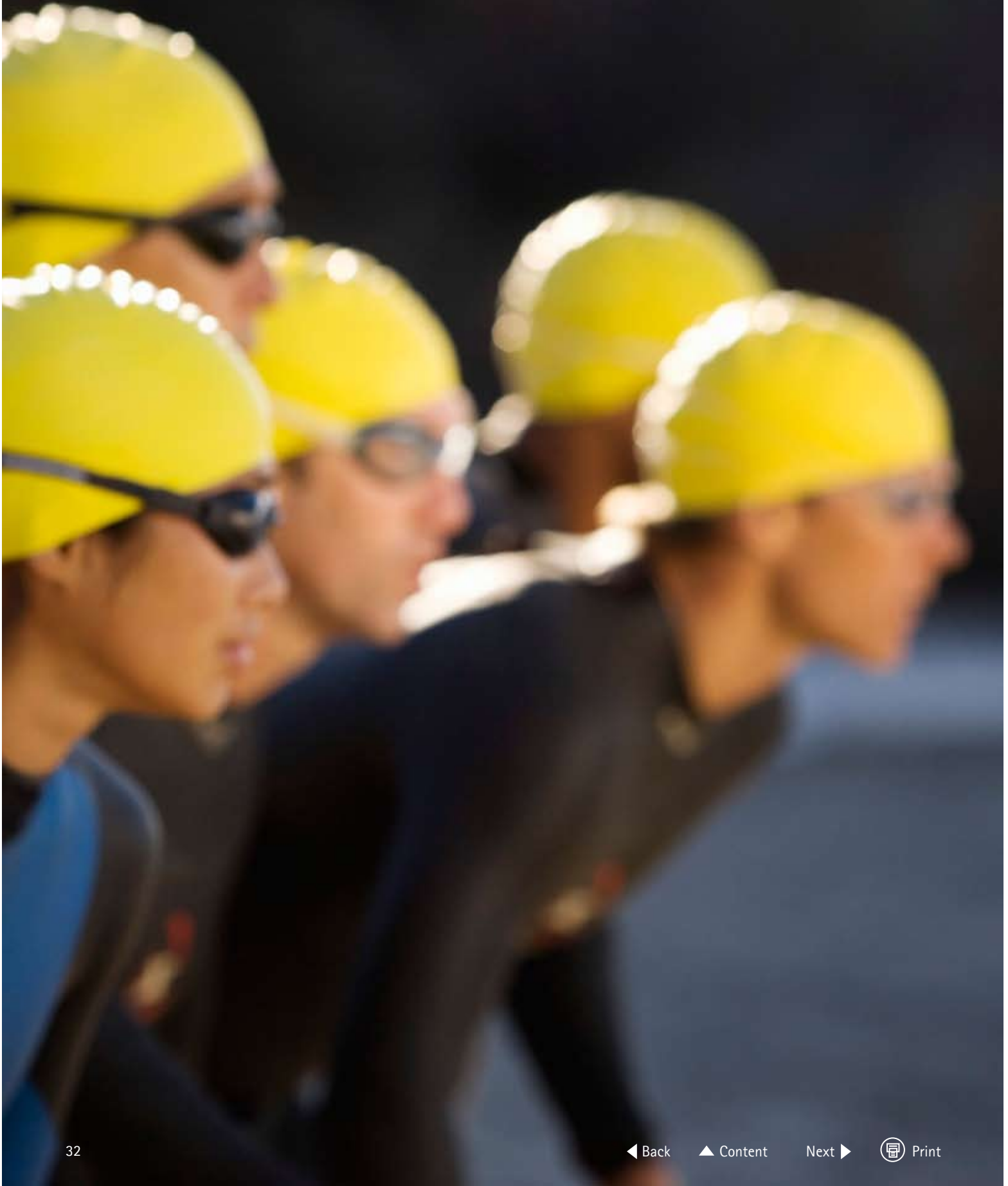
- Culture issues: Web 2.0 applications have multiple impacts on the organizational culture, and these must be understood. For example, some particularly hierarchical cultures may resist the kind of citizen empowerment that is a natural outcome of Web 2.0. In addition, the proper incentives may not be in place to encourage the kind of collaboration necessary to realize a good return on investment in Web 2.0 solutions. Indeed, in many organizational cultures, active participation in Web 2.0 websites may be seen as "wasting tax dollars."
- Increased transparency and loss of control: We have argued that better transparency is a positive outcome of Web 2.0 applications. However, one should expect to encounter resistance in some public service agencies where the desire to control information is more the norm.

- Increased security and data privacy risks: Issues here include protecting internal users and the business from malicious code and malware attacks. Many social networking sites attract large numbers of visitors, and that unfortunately means they will also be visited by potentially larger numbers of hackers. Blogging, in addition to its ability to build communities of information, can also be a way to share company secrets, either inadvertently or maliciously. The risk of potential use of sensitive personal data by an online social networking service must also be assessed.

- Strain on infrastructure and bandwidth: Web 2.0 technologies often involve the exchange and downloading of large multimedia files, which can have a negative impact on system availability for an organization.

- Compliance and administrative issues: Increasing communication with constituents through the Internet also increases the type and volume of data and records that are subject to various types of "freedom of information" laws and regulations around the world.

# Getting started



Where should public service organizations begin as they consider adopting Web 2.0 technologies to drive more valuable outcomes to citizens, engaging them as co-producers of value? Based on Accenture's current work with clients around the world, here are some practical steps to consider.

### 1. Understand the constituencies you serve.

Whether the potential Web 2.0 application is to help an internal constituency collaborate more effectively or to improve service to citizens, it is vital to develop solid intelligence about the potential audience being served. Remember that the key to producing value from these new social networking-based services is in engaging the audience as co-producers of value. That means you must develop a very close understanding of the audience's needs and how a new Web 2.0 application can make a substantive difference in their lives. You don't understand that audience only by talking with your counterparts, or conducting "brainstorming" sessions.

You need to get out there in whatever community you're targeting—use focus groups, Web surveys and the like. But then you need to vet any ideas that arise with those same types of audiences to engage them in the process and in any new tools that might be developed.

The goal of a Web 2.0 development program must be enhanced service and value to an identified group of citizens. Identifying this group can

help an agency make the right investments. A social security or pension application, for example, may not benefit from Web 2.0 development, as the segment of the population consuming such services is less likely to be using social networking technologies. That is an obvious example, but such thinking can help prevent expensive mistakes—rolling out services that few citizens are interested in or can access.

A related point about constituencies has to do with defining your communities, and then defining what information you have that adds value to those communities. From the other side, consider what information those communities have that is valuable to you and that can (again) make that community an active co-producer of value. Communities tend to exist naturally; leverage these communities and provide a framework for collaboration/communication.

### 2. Develop clear goals and objectives.

Establish clear goals, objectives and metrics for your new Web 2.0 service. Be clear about what you want to achieve and communicate those goals broadly. If you are spending the taxpayers' money, understand the benefits and be prepared to show detailed metrics if asked to prove what value you are delivering. Be ready to evaluate and change your strategy if you don't see expected outcomes.

### 3. Create a strategic plan to drive clear outcomes.

A strategic plan serves as a kind of "road map" that helps you not only set value-based goals, but also to assess progress along the journey. Identify near-term points on the journey that can serve as quick wins because those help to generate increased trust, confidence and even excitement. Bear in mind that different objectives require different levels of effort and different implementation time frames. A new Twitter implementation might be relatively easy to implement; on the other hand, enabling public information through Web services requires more time and effort. Having a road map in place, and then communicating this with the end users, gives them a sense of direction and purpose, and engages them in tracking progress.

#### 4. Assess organizational readiness.

Public sector Web 2.0 development brings with it a number of risks that must be carefully considered. One important step early on is to assess organizational readiness, a process that experienced change management professionals can perform. Is the organization ready to press on, even knowing that it may have to deal with various kinds of security, privacy and transparency risks?

As a Web 2.0 development program gets going, it is vital to get buy in from key executives, and then to enlist them as program sponsors and agents of change. When Accenture began to embrace the world of blogs and wikis, for example, we enlisted Steve Rohleder, our chief operating officer. His communications to our people about the value of better collaboration were strong and consistent. He made the case clearly that connecting and collaborating across our teams is at the heart of the company's culture and competitiveness. "We can enrich collaboration across our organization," he wrote, "by increasing our use of technology to connect with each other, innovate and share knowledge."

It's important to understand the implications of a new service both in terms of potential failure and potential success. Understanding your audience is

important to preventing failure and driving a good return on investment. However, what if the service is successful? Will you have the organizational resources at hand to actually process the information and data coming in? If you have an online forum or other social networking community, what will you do if you get a million responses? Will you be able to evaluate the responses, keep the data clean and manage the knowledge coming in?

#### 5. Implement a strong governance framework.

When it comes to creating effective accountability for Web 2.0 development from the agency's perspective, putting in place the right governance model for development and for the ongoing delivery and maintenance of the service is critically important. Again, obstacles and risks are sure to surface at some point. So a strong process for governance and decision making is essential.

Accountability must also be established from a technology point of view, as complex technology decisions will need to be made. An agency must have a good understanding of the scale of technology requirements. A successful application has the chance to stress the agency's technology infrastructure, so different options will need to be discussed, including possible outsourcing solutions for applications and infrastructure.

#### 6. Set clear policies for information sharing.

To help mitigate any potential risks of a social networking application (which is inherently more open in terms of information sharing), work early on to define clear policies and guidance for both internal and constituent-facing capabilities. Government agencies are typically very good at establishing sound controls, but those caught up in the excitement of new technologies may misconstrue "permission" to use a website or technology as permission to share inappropriate information. Leadership is more than following the crowd; it's about informed decision making and doing the right thing. So, work hard to establish clear roles and responsibilities, and then put in place sound end-user policies that are then also supported by adequate communications and end-user training. Most security risks involve human error, not technology error. Make sure your people understand their responsibilities in preventing privacy and security breaches.

## 7. Cultivate a "beta" mentality.

Many public service organizations are understandably cautious and risk averse. From an IT point of view, this can lead to delays as everyone wants to make sure it's "right the first time." But the Web 2.0 environment is much more open to experimentation with beta products. Organizations need to become more comfortable with the fact that they might not get it right the first time. As long as the application is secure, there's nothing wrong with trying something and then continually improving it.

At the same time, it is important to avoid just throwing things against a wall to see what sticks, which can disenchant your audience. We recommend beginning with some smaller applications instead of a large, monolithic, multimonth design-build-run program. Look for applications that are fast to build, test, deploy and run. Also consider mashups for sharing of data between agencies, which can deliver effective collaboration without the need for a large integration project.

Once an organization invests in the underlying platform, the deployment of new applications is relatively quick and easy. The community of users is quite aware of the fact that usage then determines what survives and what dies in the marketplace of ideas. Obtaining feedback from users about what was good or bad about an initial offering helps with subsequent releases. Or, equally valuable, it leads to quick identification of applications that can be retired because they aren't delivering the value anticipated.

# Conclusion



At its core, Web 2.0 is about empowering a greater number of people to move from “consumers” to “producers”—from passive online spectators to active contributors and co-producers of value. Those contributors may be internal to an organization, using collaborative technologies to improve the value they deliver, or they may be citizens themselves. Either way, by tapping into previously underutilized productive capacity, Web 2.0 technologies increasingly allow people to get what they need from each other. This is a game-changing concept for governments.

Web 2.0 technologies and applications have the potential to dramatically improve social and economic outcomes for citizens and to engage them as co-producers of value. Because of its inherent power to deliver services that citizens want according to their needs, Web 2.0 offers great promise in balancing choice and flexibility with fairness and the common good. Uneven power throughout a society often results from uneven access to information and services. Web 2.0 applications have the potential to serve the common good by making knowledge and services more universally available.

At a time when budgets are tight, however, government CIOs must have a solid framework by which to evaluate potential Web 2.0 technologies in light of the charge and mission of public service. The mere popularity of any given social networking service does not equal value from a public service point of view. In this regard, the Accenture Public Service Value Governance Framework can be a critically valuable asset, helping public service organizations evaluate potential applications, and then guiding the planning and decision-making processes.

Properly directed, Web 2.0 technologies can improve social and economic outcomes for citizens, and help improve the performance environment for those within an agency. By opening up the world of information to more people, new applications can help balance choice and flexibility with the common good. Social networking services can create more transparent and open government, making public service agencies more responsible and accountable for the public trust.

Perhaps more important, Web 2.0 services can engage citizens in ways almost undreamt of in previous technology eras. New technologies are bringing citizens into the world of services, rather than just pushing services to them. In this way, the new applications of social networking technologies can be an important set of tools that help public sector organizations achieve and sustain high performance.

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