



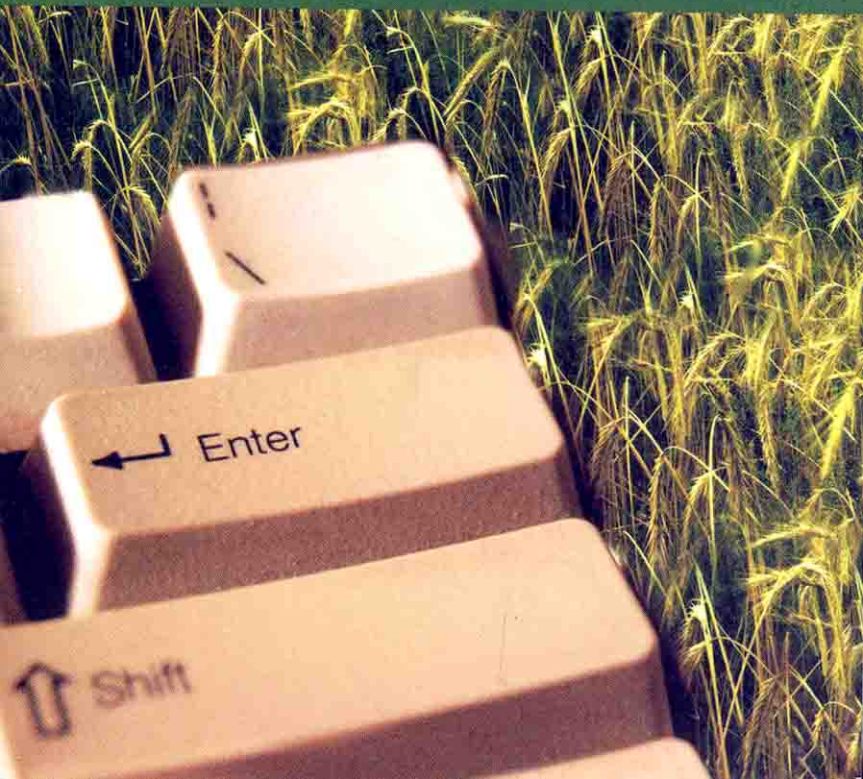
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ONE-DAY GOVERNANCE: THE GUJARAT EXPERIENCE

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ABSTRACT

This article describes a very innovative and interesting experience of bringing about a change in governance in the area of citizen interface with application of information technology. Starting from Vadodara in 2003, the One-Day Governance concept has now encompassed the whole State. This article tries to narrate this experience in terms of how it was made possible to replicate an experiment on a State-wide basis.

Good Governance and One-Day Governance

The simplest definition of Good Governance can be that it is a practice which leads to better satisfaction of citizens with lesser effort and cost to the government. At a time when speed and change are ruling the modern-day world, governance also requires to undergo a complete paradigm shift. At a time when even a five-day test match is considered too slow and a one-day match is the order of the day, it is equally impossible for people to wait for an indefinite period to get a reply to their application for a particular service from the government. It is, in this context, that the concept of One-Day Governance emerged. One-Day Governance (ODG) is all about providing faster services to the citizen in a transparent manner.

One-Day Governance is basically a promise given by the Government that eight citizen services will be made available to citizens across the counter in one hour, provided all the documents as per the check list are submitted by the citizens. It emerges out of the reality that a citizen should be able to access all services with relation to his life's events in a timely manner, irrespective of functional

fragmentation and set procedures. This is an attempt at major business process re-engineering and application of information technology for delivering instant service to citizens in the matter of those eight items such as issue of income certificate, caste certificate, minority certificate, domicile certificate, addition/deletion/modification of names in the ration card, etc.

History of Citizens' Charter

In 1998, when the Citizen Charter was the buzz word in governance, Gujarat also instructed all its departments to come out with their own Citizens' Charter in which time frames were laid out for disposing of citizens' applications. Three hundred such charters were issued by various offices in the whole state. These included the Citizens' Charter of the Collector's office which listed 75 items for which a time frame was stipulated. However, the experience of the next few years showed that in the absence of business process re-engineering taking place in the back office administration, citizens were not able to get those services within the time frame prescribed. Therefore, the district of Vadodara took the lead and decided to do something about this in 2002-03. It was not as simple as it sounded. The number of issues to be addressed included the mindset of employees.

The Vadodara Experiment

Vadodara had experimented with some amount of computerization and an effective Single Window mechanism in 2001-02 when Mr Anil Mukim was the District Collector. The district also had a very good tradition of having had some very efficient Collectors, each one of whom had contributed towards modernization of the office and training of staff, etc. Vadodara was slowly emerging as a model district. With this background, the next Collector Mr Bhagyesh Jha decided to implement the concept of One-Day Governance in which citizens would be able to access such documents instantly within an hour. The first task was to identify the list of the services which were most frequently asked for by citizens and wherein the citizen could not wait indefinitely for a reply. The next thing was to study the profile of applicants coming to the Collector's office. The most surprising thing was that the Mamlatdar's Office which had an average of 200 visitors every day was located on the 6th floor with only one

elevator in the building. So, it was decided to make a most modern Citizen Facilitation Centre on the ground floor of this office. Simultaneously with this, the process involving each one of those eight Citizen's services was studied and re-engineered to minimize the number of tables on which that proposal moved. The NIC Centre at Vadodara then started making software to take care of the front end and back office process requirements. Training programmes were also simultaneously undertaken to be given to a select team of government employees who were to man the Citizen Facilitation Centre. Agencies like the Institute of Rural Management, Anand, were roped in to impart attitudinal change training. Constant interaction with the staff at the level of the Collector helped build up a motivated team.

The finance was arranged through donations from major public sector units located in Vadodara. A charity show (Star Night) was also organized which yielded Rs 50 lakhs. A corpus of Rs 182 lakh was created, out of which Rs 120 lakhs were spent on modernization of the office, computerization, etc. while Rs 60 lakhs was set apart as corpus for taking care of running expenditure.

After all this, the Vadodara One-Day Governance (ODG) Centre became functional on 1 May 2003. It was an instant hit with the public who really appreciated the idea of getting an Income Certificate and Caste Certificate along with their photograph on it instantly across the counter. The main factor for the success of the Vadodara experiment was that it was taken as a project of 'Change Management' rather than a mere project of application of information technology.

Ahmedabad Experiment – Improvement over Vadodara

Within a year of Vadodara introducing its ODG Centre, Ahmedabad came up with a better model which eliminated some of the shortcomings of the Vadodara model. Mrs Anita Karwal, IAS, was the Collector of Ahmedabad at that time. While the Vadodara model was implemented with the help of donations plus the internal staff, the Ahmedabad ODG Centre which was by then renamed 'Jan Seva Kendra' was outsourced on the BOT model. The government had by then permitted the Collectors to charge a user fee of Rs. 20 per application for rendering such prompt service. Using this provision, the Collector, Ahmedabad found a BOT partner who designed a complete software package for the centre and provided 14 of its

employees to be trained and placed at Jan Seva Kendra for 8 hours a day. In return for this, the Collector, Ahmedabad agreed to give him Rs 6 per application for recovering the cost of software and Rs 8 per application for the operating expenditure (including cost of manpower supplied). The software expenditure incurred by the BOT operator was to be recovered over a period of 3 years out of the Rs 6 per transaction agreed upon, but because of the number of transactions which took place at this Jan Seva Kendra, he was able to recover his investment within 1½ years. Now, out of the Rs 20 which comes per application, only Rs 8 is to be given to the BOT Operator for taking care of hardware maintenance, as well as the staff of Jan Seva Kendra. The staff being supplied by the BOT operator was a great help because the Collector did not have to spare the regular staff members for Jan Seva Kendra. Secondly, the agency took care of all the maintenance problems. Thirdly, the amount which finally had to be collected by way of donation for Jan Seva Kendra was limited to the requirement of office modernization. Another innovation in the Ahmedabad Jan Seva Kendra was that some of the counters were meant for receiving applications for 68 other items of the Citizens' Charter and for giving suitable replies to citizens about where their applications were pending and how much more time they were likely to take. So, in short, the Ahmedabad experiment was an improvement over the Vadodara One-Day Governance Centre. The Ahmedabad Centre was opened in February 2004.

One-Day Governance in Municipalities and Corporations

While these two experiments were taking place in the Vadodara and Ahmedabad Collectorates, the Municipal Corporation of Ahmedabad took the lead in creating Citizen Facilitation Centres at two places in Ahmedabad wherein services such as provision of Birth Certificates, Death Certificates, Acceptance of Property Tax and Payment of Utility Bills were instantly attended to. This aroused the enthusiasm of some municipalities in the periphery of Ahmedabad City. Vejalpur Nagarpalika introduced a similar instant service centre in its office. Inspired by this, the Department of Urban Development issued guidelines to all other municipalities to provide similar services in their offices. The project caught on like wild fire and as of today, almost 125 out of 143 municipalities have One-Day Governance Centres functioning in their respective offices.

Replication of the One-Day Governance Experiment

At the annual retreat held for all senior officers and ministers at Kevadia Colony in Narmada District in June 2003, presentations were made on the Vadodara experiment which was appreciated by all other Collectors. The Chief Minister challenged the Collectors to implement more such citizen-centric innovations. Inspired by this, all other districts took it up as a challenge and tried to generate funds which could be used to set up a modern Jan Seva Kendra in all District Headquarters as well as the talukas. At the same time the government also engaged the National Institute of Design to create a common logo and signages, as well as minimum standards for services to be provided in each Jan Seva Kendra. These standards were circulated by way of a Government Resolution which also permitted Collectors to officially collect donations for their respective Jan Seva Kendras and to keep them in a separate bank account. A procedure was also prescribed for utilization of this fund through a committee.

The Government Resolution stated that along with the logo of the Jan Seva Kendra which should be visible from a distance, the name Jan Seva Kendra should be commonly adopted by all such One-Day Governance Centres. It also prescribed that Mahatama Gandhi's message, 'The citizen is the most important visitor in our premises. He is not dependent on us. We are dependent on him. We are not doing him a favour by serving him. He is doing us a favour by giving us the opportunity to do so', should be placed at the entrance of all the Jan Seva Kendras. Because of this Resolution, today, Gujarat has a Jan Seva Kendra in each of its district headquarters which provides the same type of services within one hour. Such Jan Seva Kendras have also been set up in 200 out of 225 talukas of the State. All these Jan Seva Kendras were made possible without any expenditure being incurred by the Government and without the addition of any extra staff. Even for computerization, the help of the National Informatic Centre (NIC) personnel was taken and at some other places, the BOT model was adopted. Uptil July 2005, around 9 lakh One-Day Governance transactions took place in various Jan Seva Kendras all over the State, out of which Rs 18 crore was realized as Service Fees collected. This money was used, partly to take care of maintenance costs, and partly to fund other local initiatives of good governance.

Factors Contributing to Success

If we try to analyse how it was possible to replicate an experiment by one district in all the other districts, talukas and cities, one can come up with several reasons. The first and foremost reason for success was that this was taken up more as a project of Change Management rather than a mere project of application of information technology in the working of the government. Training to achieve a change in mindset, which is the most essential component of any change management process in the government, was addressed by a massive training programme introduced by the State Government for all its 3,00,000 employees simultaneously. This training module was called the Vibrant Governance Training Module; it has already been conducted for 1,50,000 employees of the State Government so far, including peons, drivers, clerks, assistants and stenographers. This training was also popularly called 'Karmayogi Training' in Gujarat. Many of the people trained had never undergone any kind of training earlier even for an hour. The Vibrant Governance training module is the largest exercise of attitudinal change training anywhere in the country. This training programme has prepared government employees to accept any initiative of good governance. (An article on this experiment, written by this author, was published in the Independence Day special issue of *YOJANA* magazine (Aug 2005).

The second reason for the success of this initiative lies in the fact that the government allowed the local Collectors the liberty of collecting funds and using them. Also, instead of straight-jacketing the programme, it was left to the initiative of the local Collectors to introduce more innovations. Management experts have long been advocating decentralization as the key to better performance. This theory has been proved with the success of this experiment.

The third reason for success of this programme lies in the fact that the top level administration of the State Government, including the Chief Minister himself, was fully committed in promoting good governance initiatives. It is hard to imagine the Chief Minister spending a number of hours on various presentations on this programme in other states. But, in Gujarat it happened and that is how the officers were motivated to contribute their best.

Conclusion

A presentation was recently made on this experiment at a meeting of high level officials chaired by the Cabinet Secretary, GOI, wherein everyone appreciated the fact that One-Day Governance had not merely remained an experiment but had already been replicated in 125 towns, 200 talukas and all 25 districts of the State. It was felt that officers from other states must visit Gujarat to see how it happened.

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