Are you ready?

Assessing our "Digital Readiness" for e-government

It's no secret that the transition to digital government requires more than just new technologies. It requires the transformation of internal cultures and business practices. While the road to e-government can seem long and challenging, there's now an answer to the question, "How do we get started?" A community assessment tool entitled the "Digital Readiness Guide" will help agencies to determine readiness.

Once the foundation for the transition to digital government is in place, government organizations must assess their abilities in four areas - Commitment, Customers, Coordination and Capability.

Commitment is the most critical attribute to successful digital government. There must be a solid understanding of "going digital" and a Web enabling mindset must be generated. It requires a cultural change throughout the whole organization as well as the realization that all areas will be impacted.

Customers need to be the focal point of agency sites. To entice them to use the applications, customers' needs and wants must be paramount. Value to the customer should be emphasized and applications should include feedback mechanisms.

Coordination is critical because Internet applications must work in conjunction with other applications and possess a centralized infrastructure. Currently, ITD is building digital footings. Enterprise policies and standards ensure that infrastructure allows online government services to function on an enterprise wide basis and meet agencies' needs.

Capability is the final organizational attribute needed for a successful launch of digital government services. The availability of necessary resources is imperative as is technical maturity and flexibility in implementing new technologies. The ability to drive and accept change as well as using off-the-shelf components proves beneficial. Creating a place where skills can be updated allows for efficient use of components.

Analyzing the scores in these four critical areas reveals an agency's readiness to launch e-government efforts while denoting strengths and weaknesses. While the "Four Cs" do not prescribe specific policy or technology details, they instead describe the underpinnings of successful e-government programs.

The digital readiness guide was produced in collaboration with the State of Washington Department of Information Services. For more in-depth information and to review the Power Point presentation given at the Center for Digital Government sponsored Digital Readiness seminar, log onto www.itd.state.ia.us.
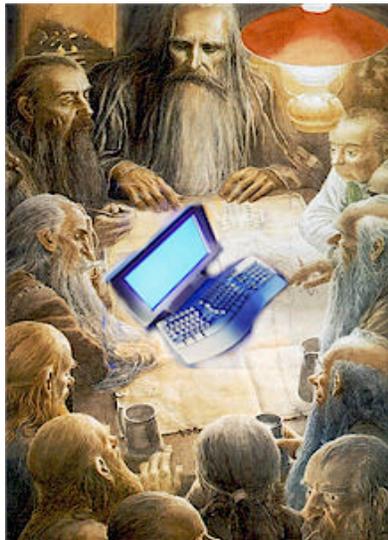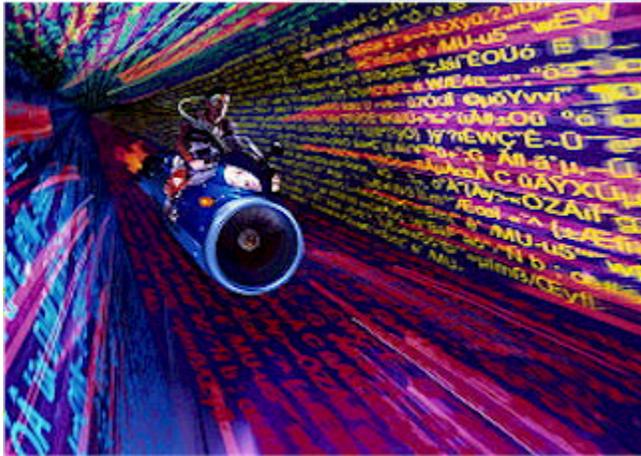
Ladies and Gentlemen:

Start Your (Payment) Engines!

This engine is revved and humming. It cranks out impressive horsepower and can accelerate from 0 to 200 kbps in seconds. It can be easily customized. Even more amazing, it's clean and uses minimal fuel. In fact it saves considerable energy and materials, especially paper. Best of all, it saves real money!

The payment engine is a centralized payment component that allows state agencies and other Iowa government entities to easily integrate online collection of payments into their applications.

The benefits of this centralized component are:
- Decreased development time for online applications
- Lower transaction fees
- Shared costs
- Standardized transactions for customers
- Convenient management features

Payments can be made by all major credit cards, debit cards and eChecks. Additional features include:

- Flexible batching (control over payment processing times to avoid late fees)
- Direct connection to state accounting system (IFAS)
- User friendly management facilities
- Off-line payment processing
- Address verification services

There is a minimal transaction fee to cover payment engine use. For more information on payment engines or if you are interested in participating, contact the Information Technology Department.

ICN & ITD both have Internet roles

Upon its establishment in 1995, the Iowa Communications Network became the State of Iowa's Internet provider supplying the primary Internet connections to state agencies, Regents Universities and educational entities served by those universities.

As a tier 2 Internet provider, it supports the following services to state government and education:

- IP number registration and management to provide agencies with fast and efficient expansion of their networks
- Management and maintenance of multiple DNS servers
- State administration of firewall management
- 24 hour contacts for fraud, hacking, spamming, etc
- Help desk services including basic trouble shooting, check router issues, domain server, NNTP, IP issues, security issues, work with equipment vendors, and with tier I Internet providers.

ITD, as the information technology provider for the state, offers Internet services for some agencies via their local area network at the capital complex. The ICN provides the gateway connectivity to ITD for those users. However, there are agencies on the capital complex directly utilizing ICN Internet services.

According to Sharon Sperry, customer liaison division administrator for ITD, if problems with Internet connectivity are experienced, the ITD Help Desk serves as the single point of contact and will make the ICN aware of the problem.

The ITD Help Desk is staffed Monday through Friday from 7:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., and serves all state agencies. Operations staff is available 24 hours, 7 days/week for after hour's assistance. Call 515.281-5703 or statewide 1-800-532-1174.

Since the ICN provides connectivity and management of the state Internet, it ultimately handles service interruptions.

ICN Distance Learning is a St★r
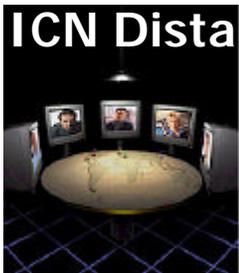
The ICN has significantly enhanced distance education opportunities in recent years. During the past school year, 37,595 students took part in special virtual field trips. Nearly 180 trips covered 23 educational topics such as "Forest Ecosystems," "Inside the White House" and "Mammals of Iowa."

A study conducted each year for the Education Telecommunications Council and funded by a federal Star Schools grant, analyzes enrollment data for classes offered over the ICN during an academic year. Classes include those sponsored by community colleges, K-12 school districts, independent colleges or universities, universities and area education agencies. Consider these findings from the 2000-2001 academic year:

- 881 classes were included in the study
- 25,882 students were served by these ICN classes
- 1,917 students were enrolled for post-secondary enrollment options credit in 152 of the classes.
- An average of 3.8 remote sites were involved with each class.
- Post-secondary students were the most common intended audience.

"ICN uses are growing at a promising rate," says Pamela Adams Pfitzenmaier, Ph.D., director, educational telecommunications at Iowa Public Television. "For example, in January 1998 there was an average of 718 video sessions per week; by January 2001, there was an average of 1,980 video sessions per week. Growth more than doubled in that three-year period."