Social Governance- is Smart Governance

'Government has to 'listen' to people and also effectively implement what it listens'

I have spent many years with the public Sector & the government customers, understanding their 'business' processes. My role was primarily into understanding the pain points of the large departments under Federal (Central) & State governments and suggest them with effective solutions to make their works better. Solutions like workflow, MIS, Web & Data Solutions were the usual solutions required by the government customers. Over the last one decade, I have seen some radical improvements in the style governments work compared to the early days, when everything was on 'paper folders' and now when many processes are computerized.

I have high order of reverence for government officials for the type of efforts they put into making people's lives better. The resources they often get are not as good as a corporate/ fortune company gets but they still are entrusted with the most important & critical projects which have direct impacts into the lives of people like you and me.

During these years, I have interacted with many officials from different rungs of the governments hierarchical ladder on 'how government could be made effective & "smart". I could identify 3 important areas to focus, which needed immediate attention-

1) **Communication within government bodies/ Departments**
2) **Collaboration for Effective Implementation (of programs)**
3) **Transparency**

I remember the days when communication within the governments departments was primarily on paper. There would be all relevant documents in a folder and on top there would be a 'note-sheet' which would have a summary of the project. Officials would write their comments on the sheet and forward it to the next decision maker. In this way the folder would move across

departments. This folder would sometimes remain on particular desk for weeks waiting to be 'moved' and due to large number of such folders pending often would also get 'lost'. This is how governments have been (and some still are) working since decades.

Ironically, even after so much of technological development, there isn't much improvement in the way they communicate. Today they do the same on computers and over emails. There would be emails, attachments, forwards, follow-up mails, redirects, CCs all dumped in staff mail boxes without traces. There would be phone calls and more emails to chase the original ones. There would be lot of noise without any clue 'WHAT has to be done and WHO has to do it". Communication within the departments is a big problem putting a detrimental impact on the overall performance of the departments & the government.

Government works on 'programs' for people's welfare. A "Child Welfare" project which aims at 'vaccinating a million kids' during a year needs a lot of collaboration to do it successfully. It not only needs the "health" department to act but also "information & media" department to communicate with public, the 'welfare' department to provide the 'feet on street' and the 'logistics' department to provide the vehicles, staff & equipments. How would they all collaborate? Over emails & Phones? Shouldn't the responsible departments go 'Social' where they could build project wise 'groups' and collaborate, share, update & communicate to track the progress of the program…and collectively plan on the next steps?

Are the programs undertaken by the government done with full transparency? Government officials are under constant scrutiny. Are the procedures they follow transparent? What is the status of Project X? What are the reasons if there is any delay and if there is any over budgeting and deviation from the original approved plan?

A 'collaborated' team would always have proper answers to such questions. They would have genuine answers with proper reasons to justify any deviations. Many a times the 'decision making' itself is questioned, for instance, "Why has the government started 'clean water' program in X village and not in the others? Is the government biased?" Such questions are common in review meetings at various levels and sometimes even in the 'parliament'. If the 'Social data' 'listened' by the government says that the maximum "water borne diseases"

happen in X village, then the government has all reasons to start the program there on priority. No questions asked! Taking peoples opinion (lets call it 'citizen sourcing') is the most important step towards transparency.

Thankfully we have something called Social Business today. Social Business is the answer to all the above problems. It could change the way government departments function today. Social Business is changing the way the world does business through crowd sourcing, better collaboration, enhanced communication & knowledge sharing.

What's more? Using Social Business, there could also be a reduction (up to 25%) of efforts required by the staff (that's a full 1 working day). Just imagine the returns in terms of improved business, reduced costs and benefits to the citizens.

How about trying "SOCIAL CLINIC" where we could meet to discuss how SOCIAL could change the way you do business? Interested? Feel free to Connect!

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About the Author

Sanjay Abraham is an Enterprise Social Consultant. He comments & blogs on the Enterprise Social Space on regular basis. He also provides consulting & training to organizations in Social Media Marketing, Social Commerce, Social Business, Social Intelligence, Big Data, SoLoMo and other topics.
Sanjay holds a Bachelors in Engineering (Computer Science) and a PG Diploma in Business Management. He has worked with top names in the IT sector like Avaya GCL & Mahindra Satyam. His client list includes top bracket names across Banking, Insurance, Retail, Public Services and other verticals. Consulting & Business Development through 'Solutioning' are his personal areas of passion.
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