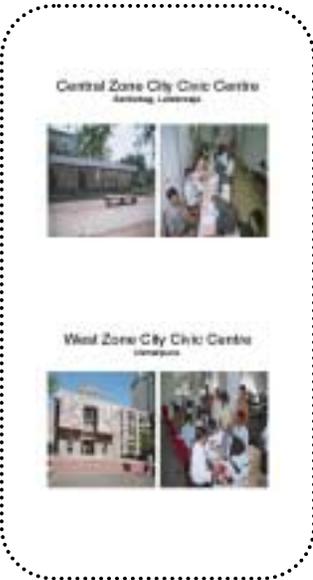




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**Special Issue on
Citizen Convenience Centre**

- Facilities Offered
- Utility Driven Website



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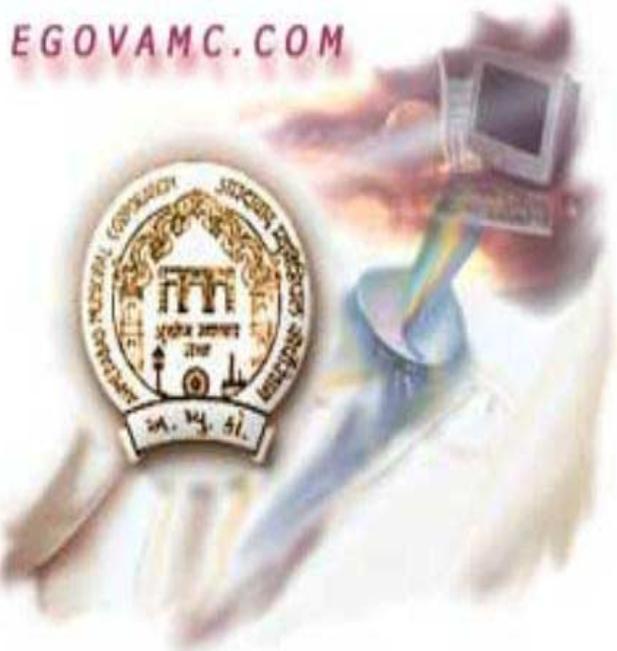
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Citizen Convenience Centre

'It is not the big who will eat the small;
it is the fast that are going to eat the slow'

"We are government of the people for the people. If we keep this principal clearly in mind as we accelerate e-government, and if we remember that the 'people' include government employees as well as citizens, we will achieve our goals."

"Success of e-governance depends on use of Information Technology in mobilization of Government resources and utilization of these scarce recourses with an aim of providing better services to citizen. This will help in sustaining any e-governance project. Secret lies in doing away with discretionary powers from the officers and making the information transparent."





Introduction

Citizen Convenience Centre (e-Governance)

Governments are the principal users and disseminators of information and the general perception is that they are not able to do a good job of it. Just as the survival of any business depends upon the material and mental satisfaction of its customers, survival of government is also hinged on the contentment of its citizens. The exploration of this interface - the areas where government and citizens meet, is vital to our understanding of where and how technology should intervene to make this interface more transparent and less bothersome for both the partners.

Presently the relationship of Citizen and Government is more of a benefactor - beneficiary. The citizens have become used to waiting in long queues, getting insensitive and harsh interim responses, greasing the palms for making anything move or get stalled. The citizens don't complain as they think that is of no avail. They feel helpless and unmotivated to be inspired into any such acts. In fact, the rot has gone further and entered the psyche of the citizens where the reaction is either of silent submission or overt connivance to such practices.

Information is government's biggest equity and it is essential that the Government uses it for the maximum benefit of maximum number of citizens. Quick access to this information is possible by throwing the it open into the public domain. The time and energy it takes to process and send information between various sections within a department and between various departments severely impedes the decision making process and becomes a breeding ground for corruption.

When people talk about e-government, the primary focus is often the technology. They too often ignore important "people implications" of e-government

When Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (AMC) along with a private partner (Microtech Systems, a local company based in Ahmedabad) designed and implemented e-Governance (City Civic Centre) all of the above was kept as central focal point. e-Governance at Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation is one success story. Gujarat Informatics Limited (GIL) has played a key role by initiating the project and by investing in the software development cost, so as to retain the Intellectual Property Rights.



Benefits

Benefits of the e-Governance project and Frequently Asked Questions

The main benefits of the e-Governance project are:

1. Transparency to the citizens
2. Information at the finger tips both for the citizens as well as employees of the corporation.
3. Accountability both for the citizens by paying taxes as well as employees of the corporation by delivering services.

Surprisingly all the above points have intangible benefits! Normally when an IT project is conceptualized, tangible benefits are the main consideration. Three major questions that are always asked when any person visits the City Civic Centre:

1. 'What is the payback period?'
2. 'Will the e-Governance project work once the present team leaves?'
3. 'How was the project implemented?'

Any citizen after visiting the City Civic centre is so engrossed that he forgets that all these years he was just waiting in line to be served, if at all. Citizen takes it for granted in casual manner all the services offered. Only when he visits other government department for service then it hits him and realizes the enormous task AMC took in implementing City Civic Centre. A Question that comes more often than not to the mind of Citizen is

'Why can't other Government offices offer the same kind of services as the City Civic Centre?'

A citizen remarked on entering City Civic Centre 'This is not corporation office, it is a corporate office!' Ambience is good (employees as well as citizen feels great in offering and accepting the service), no wood and glass barriers, face to face at same eye level meeting, music, water cooler. And in all these there, is no Information Technology involved! It is the work attitude that is manifested.

'What is the pay back period?'

Simple point of on-line interest calculation and collection fetches AMC Rs. 2 Lacs per day! This year AMC will collect Rs. 2 Crores in three months by way of interest alone. This itself covers the project cost. A person paying interest realizes that he is shelling out unnecessary amount of money, be it Rs. 10 or Rs. 1000. A thought



Increase in revenue, more so for the property tax, as year end billing will be done six months faster i.e. in the month of April. Rs. 80 Crores collected six months early itself gives interest income of Rs. 4 Crores! This again recovers the project cost. Please realize that once the billing is done early, the staff has eleven months to go after the defaulters.

Information available of any financial liability on one screen. Previously all database was segregated and only the bill with which the citizen came was collected. Now, he knows where he stands and gladly pays all the arrears. Employee of AMC is happy that he doesn't have to get up and fetch physical records to find arrears. This if he does for all the citizens throughout the day, then he has to be a robot! So in the past he avoided fetching physical information and the AMC lost heavily. Well all computers are Robots.

There are other benefits on revenue generation like Shop and Establishment fees. Previously, in manual way only 60 licenses were issued per day. Now close to 400 licenses are issued

Only the means of paying tax was cumbersome. Arrears in vehicle tax alone is Rs. 72 Crores over the years. Imagine how many kilometers of roads could be built or resurfaced with this amount. Well, now it is possible to collect Rs. 8 Crores as yearly vehicle tax. This again recovers project cost!.

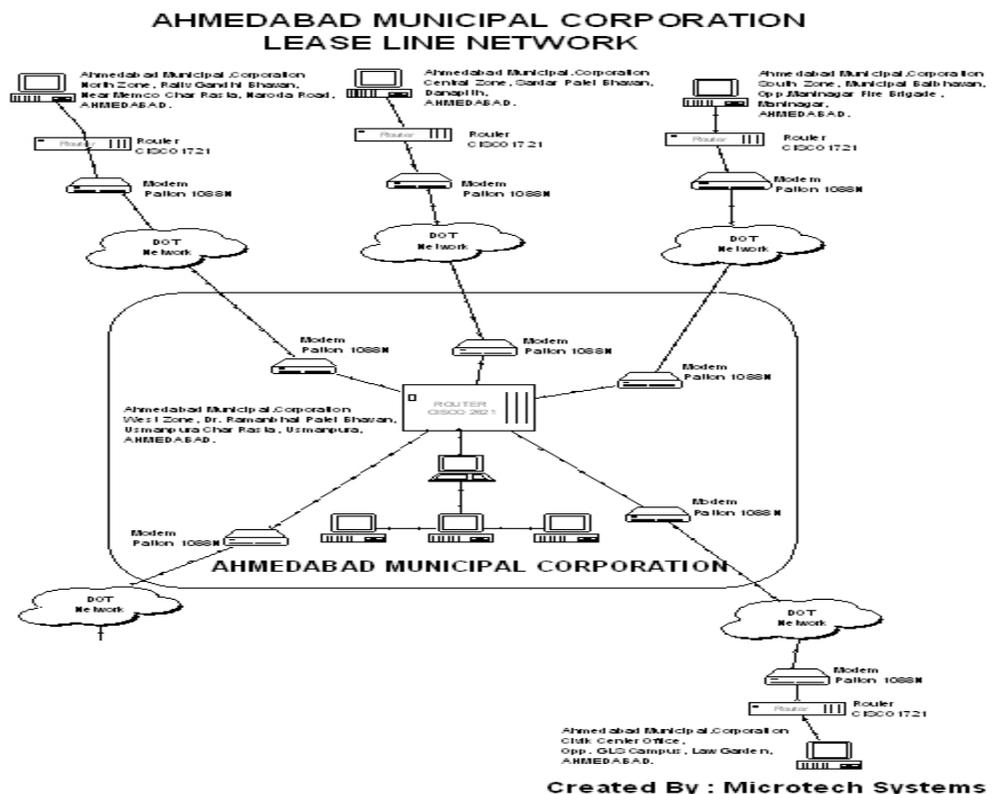
'Will the e-Governance project work once the present team leaves?'

City Civic Centre is run by employees of the corporation. Day to day running of the system is not dependent on private partner. Also the whole project is data intensive. Lot of hardwork and time goes into converting paper information into digital. When the information is available at a instance then only a project is a success and will

Also the AMC benefits financially like stated earlier. In case the system dies where will the revenue come for proving even the basic services to the citizen.

Employees are the main beneficiary. For them they can reply to the citizen with a smile compared to a sneer. He does not have to look for physical records. He goes home without tension and enjoys life with his family. Previously the working environment was of lot of tension. He works efficiently and gets less tired. He is able to deliver more.

'How was the project implemented?'





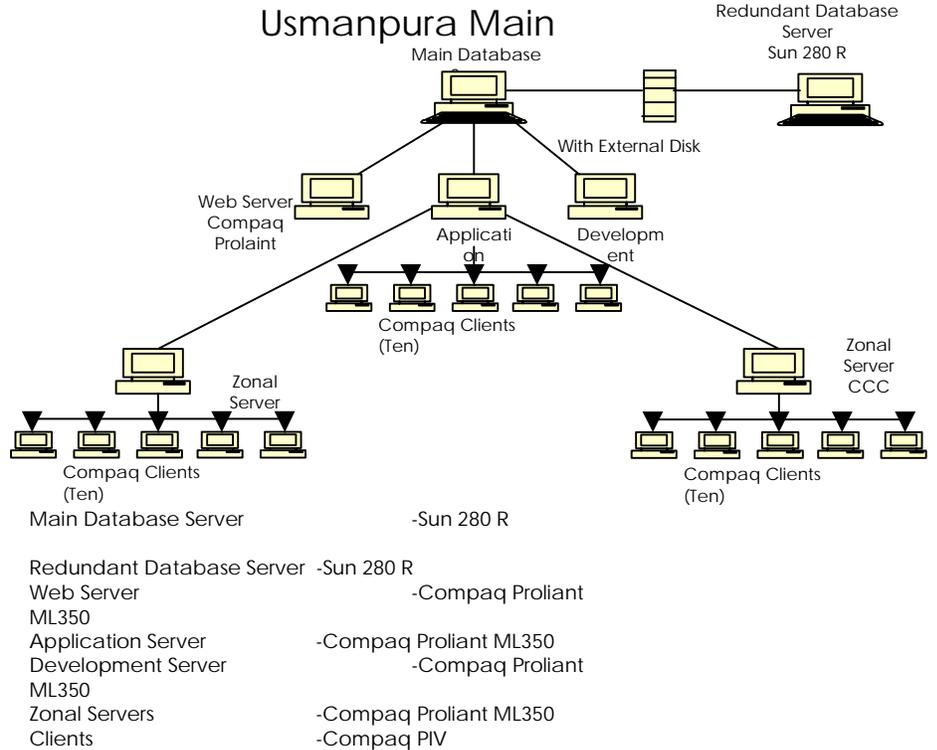
design to suit AMC, not that a readymade software developed for some other purpose altered to suit AMC.

Employees of the corporation did the system study and suggested improvements to be made. All employees were allowed to give their views without any hierarchal flow of thoughts. Teams were made of actually the employees within the department and the employees who were going to use the system. Departmental heads were not part of the team!

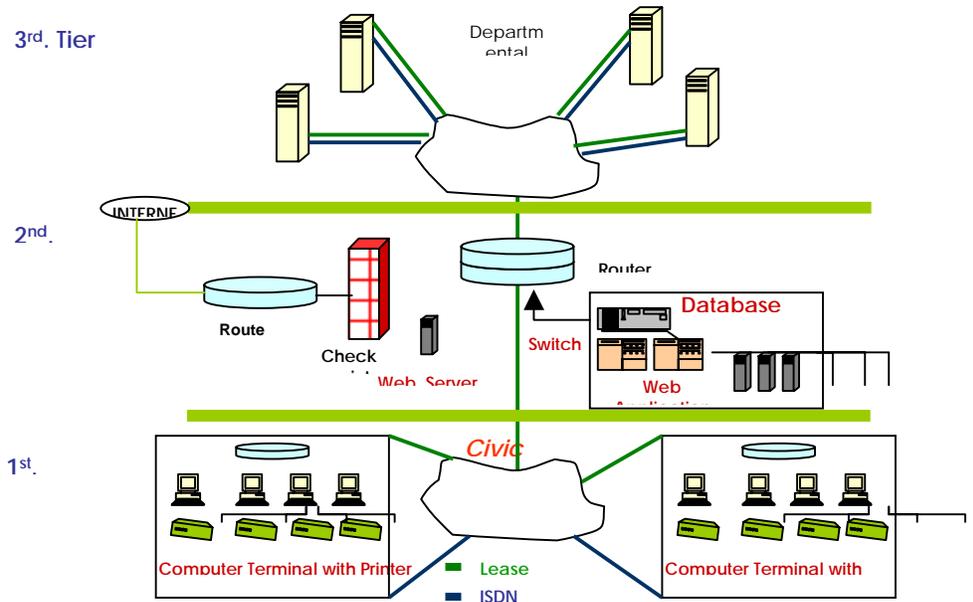
Flow charts were given by the employees. At each stage of software development, employees views were taken. When they use the system, it is a feeling they get, that the present e-Governance system would not have been possible without them. Employees are proud of the e-Governance project and rightfully so. Identification of key staff to form a core team, constant monitoring, and marketing of the concept to citizens also contributed to the success of the of the project.

Various presentations were kept at different stages of the project. One presentation was kept in

module. Their inputs were taken into consideration and software suitably modified.



Civic center Network Architecture





Facilities

Various Facilities Offered By Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation

ONLINE ISSUANCE OF SHOP AND ESTABLISHMENT LICENSES

Shop and Establishment licenses are issued over the counter to the citizen if he comes with the required papers. Previously he had to wait for a week and make two to three rounds or simply he will give the work to middle man. Renewals are also made over the counter. The system also collects Signboard fees.

ONLINE PAYMENT OF MUNICIPAL DUES

The financial management of governments hinges on a sound, transparent, efficient and foolproof tax collection system. The method should be the ease and flexibility with which the citizen is able to pay their dues.

Before the project was put into place, the citizens were required to go to the ward office, get in touch with the tax collector for calculating and preparing the payment chalans.

As the entire operation was done manually, searching through the records and carrying out the required calculations would invariably take time and in the event the tax collector was not present, citizens had to waste their precious time and energy. The citizens also did not have any idea about the calculations made by the Corporation while determining their dues. This led to resentment. The system also led to huge amount of paper work at all levels entailing huge costs and time delays.

Local banks are now collecting the taxes. The assesses can carry the demand notice to any of the earmarked bank branches or City Civic Centre,

where, after entering the assessment number they instantly get complete information with updated calculation of the demand and the arrears along with the interest applicable.

ONLINE FILING AND SETTLEMENT OF COMPLAINTS & GRIEVANCES

The Municipal Corporation's Website & Civic centre provides the citizens the facility to lodge their complaints/grievances online. The grievance gets forwarded to the concerned officer for necessary action and also goes into the database for monitoring grievance settlement. The entire status of the complaints and its disposal process also gets instantly communicated to the complainant so that he can see the action being taken on the field.



ONLINE TRACKING OF BUILDING PLAN STATUS

The Municipal Corporation engages in the task of approving the building plans, sub-division of plots and regularization of the structures within the city limits. The citizens have no clue as to the status of the respective cases. The Website has opened the floodgates of information to the public through internet. Now at the click of the mouse, the status of the application is known without running from pillar to post. The entire process of scrutinizing, processing and sanctioning of Building Plan approvals has been computerized. This allows online tracking and monitoring of the movement of any such paper within the town planning section. This has also helped the section in meeting the statutory deadline set for the release of the plans and also allows the citizens gain access to the status of disposal of their applications.

ONLINE REGISTRATION OF DEATHS AND BIRTHS

Registration of Birth and Death is mandatory. Every citizen is valuable human resource of the country therefore it becomes everybody's responsibility towards the country to register any Birth or Death in the family. The Corporation Website will provide access to all the hospitals, registered with them the facility to send the Birth and Death information online, after charging minimal incremental costs. The entire operation of collecting the information from the hospitals and maintaining it in the master records used to take years together previously. It primarily became the responsibility of the citizens to ensure that concerned Sanitary Inspector sends the required data to the Corporation office.

INSTANT ISSUANCE OF DEATHS AND BIRTH CERTIFICATES

The citizens will be able to get their certificates delivered to them in real quick time.

By maintaining the database of Birth & Deaths on the computer, the process of sorting, searching and accessing the database will become very simplified.

INFRASTRUCTURAL WORKS ONLINE & TENDER INFORMATION

The process of issuing tenders & sanctioning infrastructural works and their processing within the organization has been computerised. This has helped the Corporation to monitor and track the execution of such works and also helps in keeping better control over the expenditures beyond the sanctioned budget which hitherto used to be the case. The entire module has also been linked to the web site so that the citizens are able to see the infrastructural works being taken up in their respective ward areas and their status.



A UTILITY DRIVEN WEBSITE- www.egovamc.org & www.egovamc.com

The World Wide Web or the Internet provides the most cost-effective method of reaching the people. The web can not only help in the speedy dissemination of information but can also help the citizens get access to various services which hitherto required their physical presence. In order to realize this objective, the AMC Web Site was launched under this project. While developing the web site, it was made very clear that it will not merely be an information driven web site but would be a utility driven web site and would act as a window to the outsiders to gain access to the AMC intranet and local area network. Both the static page information & the dynamic pages are being hosted on the AMC server and are being accessed through it.

By doing this, the necessity of continuous updation and uploading of information, which becomes the bane of most web sites. All the dynamic pages take their inputs regularly as part of the in house computerized network and get updated automatically.

Now at the click of the button, the citizens are able to see the property dues pertaining to them as on that moment or can access their birth and death records to check their entries. A builder can check the status of disposal of the building application made by him while citizens are able to track the status of disposal of the complaints or grievances made by them through the internet or through the Civic Center or in person.

Every citizen has a right to know about the functioning of the government machinery as it is directly related to him or her. However, as the activities of the enterprise increase so do the formats, rules, bylaws, procedures and orders that govern them. The Web Site also gives online information related to the information as to how the property tax is arrived at, related procedures and government rules, building rules, regulations etc. The web site also carries linkages to the office Intranet, allowing them to gain access to it from anywhere.

This is only the beginning, since the areas where technology can make governments do their job better, are endless. The gains are palpable, citizens are getting used to it considering the hits the site is getting.



Web Corner

Tribal Development
<http://tribaldevelopment.gswan.gov.in>

Sardar Sarovar Nigam
www.sardarsarovardam.org

GSDMA
www.gsdma.org

Please look out for this section for URLs
of Government websites

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Note: Please note that the official website of the Sardar Sarovar Narmada Nigam Ltd. is www.sardarsarovardam.org and not www.sardarsarovardam.com, as mentioned in our last issue. We apologize for the mistake.