

### **'e-Administration', a Paper Less Office Tool, for e-Governance**

Information Technology (IT) has today become an integral part of governance, especially in India. IT is viewed as a tool that will help deliver services, both in the public and the private sector, to the ubiquitous common man.

E-governance, as a concept, involves leveraging IT to streamline the administrative process — it involves computerisation of records, facilitating efficient transactions between various government departments, networking offices and using websites and e-mail to bring administrators closer to people.

In the past decade, e-governance has been a popular buzzword among politicians and bureaucrats alike, especially in India. One quasi-Government organisation in Tamil Nadu, has decided to go the distance, by implementing e-governance at a micro level – their office is now completely paperless and file-transfer takes place in an electronic format.

Using a tool aptly titled “e-Administration”, Chennai-based Sports Development Authority of Tamil Nadu (SDAT), with the help of an Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) organisation called Life-Line to Business (LL2B.COM), has introduced a workflow and document management process sans physical movement or use of paper.

LL2B.COM's 'e-Administration' tool allows SDAT officials to sanction purchases, approve official activities and transfer files flawlessly in completely electronic format. With a view to introduce transparency in their workflow process, all the files processed in the organisation are made available on a central server, while the status of pending files can be obtained at any stage. There is no physical movement of files at any stage — only the final order copies are printed and stored as physical record.

#### **The Nuts and Bolts**

As part of its e-governance initiative, SDAT embarked on a paper-less office drive for introducing transparency and accountability in its internal and external transactions.

SDAT, the nodal organization for sports activities in the state, decided to introduce “e-Administration” — a paperless File Management System, which ensures speedy disposal of files. The entire process — creation, movement, monitoring, and approval of files takes place electronically, resulting in better utilisation of manpower. “This helps avoiding delays which leads to better governance,” according to SDAT officials.

'e-Administration' is the brainchild of ICT specialist, Kris Dev (VDG Krishnan), who has over a quarter of a century hands-on managerial experience in the Public Sector in India and a leading MNC in North / South America. He is the Founder President of Life-Line to Business (LL2B.COM Pvt. Ltd). His urge was to develop a simple yet effective solution, that can help to transform the Governments, Corporates, SMEs and NGOs. The tool was conceived by him, after his return to India, as an apt solution for e-Governance in the developing world, based on his experience in both the developing and the developed world.

e-Administration, is a web-enabled, platform-independent, paperless solution developed on an Open Source platform, for paperless communication within and

outside an organization. It uses open source offerings such as Java, JBoss, PGSQL all running on Linux.

The tool, according to Kris, can reduce the cycle time for file approval from an average of two to three weeks to one week. This can also result in a considerable reduction of paper-usage within an organisation, thereby saving valuable natural resources.

According to Kris, LL2B's tool, empowers every employee in the organization to discharge his or her duties efficiently. It has also reduced the dependence on subordinates and makes the organization system-oriented rather than people-centric. This is likely to result in increased productivity.

Being a Linux platform, local language content can also be easily added. This tool can be used by any organization whose activities involve dealing with multiple agencies, for simultaneous review and action. The tool also aids knowledge management and integration in NGOs for self-assessment, decentralised field updating and centralised review and monitoring.

### **The Process**

SDAT conducted trials for independent evaluation, with a view to adopt the best tool.

LL2B.COM's product was chosen based on its ease of use and easy customisation and upgradability, as decided by a committee of employees.

Currently, e-Administration system connects about 40 users, through a dedicated powerful four-way Xeon dual Processor with RAID facility, running a versatile open source PG SQL database as backend on Linux open source server

The tool simplifies the process of generating files and enables moving note sheets electronically, for approval. Instead of physically carrying note sheets for approval, from table to table, the employees began using the tool. Receipt of the e-document was indicated by pop-up alert messages on the officers' monitors.

All letters received from external agencies could now be scanned and converted into electronic documents, which would then be added to the central repository. This system enables a user to check the status of a file, at any stage. More importantly, delays are minimised as the files can be traced instantly through the network — employees can now know which officer has kept the file pending.

"The biggest advantage of 'e-Administration' is that it enables us to view, at any stage, the status of pending file. The details are available on a central server and can be accessed by anyone, having the authority. This way, workflow is simplified,".

LL2B's "e-Administration" tool not only effects a dramatic reduction of stationary usage, and time taken to process documents, it also serves to introduce transparency in the working of any organisation.

The employees of SDAT also took to the system rather well. According to SDAT, "Our employees became more and more comfortable with using the tool as the trials progressed. It's quite user-friendly and doesn't require a lot of technical expertise. I myself began using the system without any formal training, and have been using it successfully for six months now."

## Accolades

At the 7<sup>th</sup> National e-Gov conference held in Chennai in November 2003, MD, ELCOT received a merit citation award from Government of India, for implementation of “e-Administration, as a tool for e-Governance”.

The Industrial Guidance Bureau of the Government of Pondicherry has implemented an integrated e-Platform, a quickly customized solution of ‘e-Administration’, to automate the activities of the Directorate of Industries and Commerce. (Refer Budget 2004-2005 Address of H.E. the Lt. Governor, Pondicherry <http://www.pon.nic.in/open/depts/finance/lgspeech2004.pdf>).

A unique initiative, being attempted for the first time in India, 21 Departments — including municipalities and Panchayats are connected on a simple dial-up. The central repository server will be located at the District Industries Centre, Pondicherry. This will form a dedicated electronic network. The network will allow the Government to grant permission, for example to set up an industry; it can also help a manufacturing unit obtain a Licence to commence production, etc.

Says Kris, “This would save a lot of time, effort and cost to industrialists and citizens as well as officials of various Departments. As opposed to submitting 10 copies of documents in the manual system, in the electronic system, only one signed copy needs to be submitted, thereby helping save paper. It can help to fuel investment in the State and generate employment for local people.”

Such an integrated e-Platform can be used by the ministries and Undertakings of the Central Government as well as various State Governments, where ever multiple agencies are involved in scrutinizing applications and granting time bound clearances for plan approval, building constructions, setting-up industries, etc. It can bring about the much desired transparency and accountability.

Instead of resting on their laurels, LL2B plans to reach out to the various Government Departments and Undertakings as well as Corporates, SMEs and NGOs by implementing their solutions in as many public and private organisations as possible, in India and the developing world, **by offering the basic solution free and charging only for the customisation, installation, training, hand holding, annual maintenance and upgrade support. This is expected to benefit vastly Governments in India and the developing world, by saving on e-Governance expenditure.**

While it's naïve to believe that “e-Administration” paperless office solutions like LL2B's, may just be the panacea for our red-tape ridden bureaucracy, it certainly is a step in the right direction — one small step for e-governance, a giant leap for democracy!

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