

Bringing power to the people

The internet has fundamentally changed the nature of government. Administrations use it to process information and facilitate transactions, but also as a means of collaboration and self-service. This is so in both traditional and mobile applications, says **Tan Sian Lip** of CrimsonLogic

Information has never been more easily accessible than it is today. Round-the-clock TV channels provide up-to-the-minute news while the click of a mouse brings people information on any topic they choose.

The commercial world has responded by expanding its online services to provide customers with greater choice and openness, further increasing the pressure on governments worldwide to improve the level of service they provide to their 'customers' – the general public. With this trend at the forefront of their thinking, the Singapore eGovernment Services Alliance (SESA), an initiative launched in September 2007, aims to bring Singapore's world-leading eGovernment best practices and solutions to governments across the Middle East. "SESA leverage Singapore's wide base of eGovernment experiences in order to bring the latest solutions and services to market, services that have been successfully implemented in Singapore and other parts of the world," says Tan Sian Lip, Vice President of Solutions and Technology at CrimsonLogic, one of the prime movers behind SESA. "With internet usage rising rapidly in the Middle East, there is immense potential for SESA to offer their expertise in this market."

The SESA alliance brings together five Singapore-based companies (CrimsonLogic, Ditium, Elixir, RSTN and V3 Teletech) with proven expertise in the eGovernment sector, expertise which they now aim to bring to a wider audience. "eGovernment services can be defined as the application of IT to transform the way governments work, share information and deliver services for the benefit of governments, businesses and citizens," says Tan. "SESA's value proposition is grounded

in eGovernment. The five alliance members possess great expertise in their specific areas and all are focused on both utilising and providing best-of-breed technology solutions. Our solutions have brought great benefits internationally in terms of (among others) cost savings and increased productivity, particularly in the judicial, trade and logistics departments. SESA's goal is to simplify processes and make dealings between government and business more transparent and efficient."

Learning from Singapore

Currently ranked as having the world's no.1 eGovernance model, Singapore provides a shining example of how to provide effective services that both engage citizens and enhance government transparency.

Long regarded as one of the world's least corrupt countries, Singapore's highly developed eGovernment services make an important contribution to the country's continuing prosperity. "Singapore's model clearly distinguishes between inputs, outputs, and outcomes," explains Tan. "It makes individual ministries and agencies accountable for the outcomes of their eGovernment spending, thus recognising that in most cases, the 'e' part of eGovernment is really an input or output rather than an outcome of eGovernment. This helps ensure we can achieve the speed and accountability of a distributed model whilst retaining the synergy of a centrally controlled one. In Singapore, about 1,600 government services are readily available over the internet."

However, the provision of effective eGovernment services can be seen in a wider context than merely the political. Access to eGovernment services has played a key role in developing

Singapore's knowledge-based economy, as well as helping it to remain efficient and competitive. Indeed, Mike Yap, CrimsonLogic's Regional Business Development Manager for the Middle East & North Africa, believes it is hard to underestimate its potential. "Collaborative eGovernment can be a strategic tool for any government to bring about the best for the nation, its businesses and its people," he says. "The key to any national eGovernment initiative is the alignment of purposes and objectives which would drive the necessary synergy and commitment from the relevant stakeholders. Crucial to this alignment is a comprehensive and continuous capacity building programme for government decision makers, government personnel and staff, and also the general public."

The success of the Singaporean model has encouraged SESA to pursue an ambitious set of objectives in the Middle East. Indeed, although there are wide variations within the regional market, Tan remains confident that their approach can be successful. "In the Middle East, there is great potential for the expansion of citizen-centric government services," he says. "Since eGovernment is primarily about modifying the way Governments do their work, there is no real reason why it cannot work anywhere in the world – unless a Government does not want to re-examine and re-imagine the way it works so as to serve its own people better. Middle Eastern governments recognise that the very nature of the modern world is fundamentally changing citizens' expectations of government. Many governments in the region have the financial means to make these changes, while people are increasingly aware of other models of governance and service as a result of

being exposed to life in other parts of the world via the Internet, international media and travel.”

SESA is looking to develop eGovernment projects in areas ranging from licensing and land registry’s to tax management. However, Tan is keen to stress that these are far from being the only areas where improved eGovernment services will bring benefits. “The possibilities are endless,” he enthuses.

“Our approach is to rethink how the government and public can work together and lay firm foundations to both adapt to, and harness, technological advances. We must make effective use of technology to realise changes and anticipate future developments. For example, there is a clear need to streamline processes

“This is a seven year long project, worth about US\$30 million, and it is now in operation at two major seaports (Jeddah Islamic port and Dammam port), which together contribute about 35 per cent of the total trade volume of the Kingdom. Furthermore, the system for Riyadh Airport and Riyadh Dryport (or railport) is in the final stages of implementation.

“SaudiEDI provides a suite of eTrade services customised to the needs of the trading community in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. It facilitates fast and transparent interactions between businesses and government (B2G) and among government agencies (G2G) to bring significant time and cost savings for the trading community.”

These kinds of benefits mean that

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in the legal community, a need to which CrimsonLogic’s award-winning eJudiciary/legal applications, the Electronic Filing System and LawNet, respond directly. Similarly, the provision of world class healthcare services to citizens requires huge physical infrastructure and highly sophisticated IT systems. We believe that implementing both primary care and secondary care solutions will bring real benefits and help improve the Government’s delivery of healthcare to its citizens.”

Providing real benefits


Although at a relatively early stage of its development, SESA has already been able to build on some of the major contracts won by CrimsonLogic, contracts which the alliance hope will help them build a positive reputation in the region.

“We were engaged by the Public Investment Fund (PIF) under the Ministry of Finance in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to build its business and technology infrastructure, as well as to operate SaudiEDI – an electronic trade (eTrade) project,” explains Tan.

both popular and commercial demand for eGovernment services is likely to grow, placing increasing pressure on SESA to meet what are often extremely complex needs.

“The successful implementation of eGovernment initiatives is critically dependent on the kind of detailed, specialised knowledge of governance that is found within individual government verticals,” says Jafarulah Khan, CrimsonLogic’s Technical Project Director, pointing to the need to find alternative ways of delivering services, something that Tan says is made possible by the innovative use of IT.

“We are seeing an increasing focus on interoperability, in particular utilising the Single Electronic Window (SEW),” he says.

“At the same time we are also looking to use Enterprise Architecture (EA) and Service Oriented Architecture (SOA) within modern eGovernment solutions,” continues Tan, describing an emphasis on innovation which directly reflects the rapid pace of change in the Middle East, change with which the SESA alliance is determined to keep pace. 



Technology at CrimsonLogic. He promotes the company’s technological vitality in order to sustain its ability to harness cutting-edge technology in service of its customers’ needs. Before joining CrimsonLogic he worked for the Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS) where he was responsible for mobile banking and payment security guidelines.