Meet the public service growth hackers:
How regulatory and licensing agencies can embrace digital to drive the economy

High performance. Delivered.

Starting, growing and closing a business can be a difficult time for anyone. But the ability to do so quickly and easily is vital to economic growth. As business owners go through these critical periods of change, they access government services to stay compliant and gain support. Managing these 'corporate formalities', such as securing permits, licenses, grants and tax credits, is vital to running a business legally and effectively. Citizens expect the experience to be quick, easy and digital[1].

We evaluated 18 regulatory and licensing agencies in 6 countries from a business owner's perspective to explore the current state of digital best practice. Despite a general move towards digital channels by governments, most regulatory and licensing agencies are still looking digital, not being digital. High performers provide a truly integrated and collaborative experience designed around the needs of users. They also use their wealth of business information to encourage growth and service improvement through open data initiatives.

In the race for sustainable economic growth, regulatory and licensing agencies must embrace digital to become public service 'growth hackers'[2], more proactive partners focused on the success of their business community—while still protecting public welfare—delivering public service for the future.

"Removing administrative barriers...can set an economy on a path to greater prosperity and development."

Kaushik Basu, Senior VP and Chief Economist, World Bank. Doing Business 2015. World Bank.

One-stop shops—serve the customer, not yourself!

In the business world, speed and certainty are key. Business owners expect government to provide instantaneous support and automated processes that simplify their lives and help them reach their goals.

In reality, that experience varies greatly—from advanced online business portals that act as genuine one-stop shops, to digital link libraries that simply point users to other parts of government.

All six countries studied have centralized websites, but half of them are still 'looking digital' than 'being digital'. Despite progress, some agencies in even the most advanced economies are still in the early stages of digital maturity. For examples, many one-stop websites cover multiple public service agencies, but simply provide forms or links, putting the onus on the end user. In one case, an entrepreneur must download and read a 65 page PDF document to understand the requirements for opening a business.

Direct digital service provision through these websites is rare, but a true one-stop shop solution is possible. Countries like Sweden and France are leading the way. Through a seamless digital experience they are fostering business growth by enabling cross-government collaboration and proactive public service delivery.

Case study: Sweden's Verksamt

Sweden has embraced digital integration, delivering a seamless, user-centric digital service through its business portal, Verksamt.se[3]. A collaboration between the Swedish Companies Registration Office, National Tax and the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth, the portal provides users with pre-populated digital services in an online account.

When changes are made with one agency, they are automatically updated to others. Its seamless integration even extends to paper applications—a postal business registration is quickly reflected in the user's online account. Customers can also use their online e-ID as a legally binding digital signature, simplifying document-signing procedures.

To be digital is to be mobile

As countries increase their efforts to digitize corporate formalities and ease the burden of licensing applications, the next public service frontier must be mobility. In the U.S. alone, research shows that 51 percent of citizens aged 18-44 desire access to government services via their mobile device[4]. Improved mobility will lead to increased uptake by entrepreneurs who have already adopted mobile platforms in their own businesses. It will also deliver higher customer satisfaction and a seamless experience—allowing users to begin tasks on one device and continue on another.

However, the research shows that agencies responsible for corporate formalities have not fully embraced the possibilities of mobility. While three out of the six countries offer a mobile application, only Singapore's app offers direct access to government services. In the U.S. and Australia, the apps only provide information and access to social media feeds. More positively, however, all departments sampled (except France) have optimized their portal websites for mobile devices.

Case study: Singapore's EnterpriseOne

In Singapore, government services are streamlined for mobile devices. The country's EnterpriseOne business portal[5] is optimized for mobile viewing, providing users with access to government services, local SME-related news, interactive FAQs, details of forthcoming events and information for businesses divided into 'plan-start-grow' sections.

Open data = Open for business!

Public service leaders can also embrace digital to improve service delivery and boost economic growth through open data. By making data available, an agency can evolve its own role—from one of public protection to a proactive mission promoting and driving business growth.

Our research showed that four of the countries surveyed have already opened access to business registration data (or plan to do so). The release of such data sets—for example, making existing business registration information machine-readable and publicly available—provides a host of benefits. For example, entrepreneurs can use the data to make decisions based on previous registrations—decisions likely to impact their own success.

Europe is currently leading the way in open public service data; the Open Data Strategy for Europe is predicted to deliver a €40 billion boost to the EU's economy[6]. In 2014, UK was the first country to have opened up its company register data[7], where Companies House makes all of its data available free of charge. Sweden's Verksamt also has an open data initiative underway, which promises to extend available data sets from 8 to 48 in 2015[8].

By opening up data, agencies can harness the power of information to stimulate the market and aid businesses decisions. In the process, businesses will highlight areas where agencies can best support them—driving public service improvement and growing the economy.

Digital is not discretionary

Leading countries such as Sweden have already shown how regulatory and licensing agencies can embrace digital channels, design services according to user need and open public service data to improve access to corporate formalities.

By following best practices, other agencies can do the same. Collaboration across government is key, but by prioritizing digital, agencies can greatly improve the customer experience, provide better support to business users and, in turn, drive economic growth—delivering public service for the future.
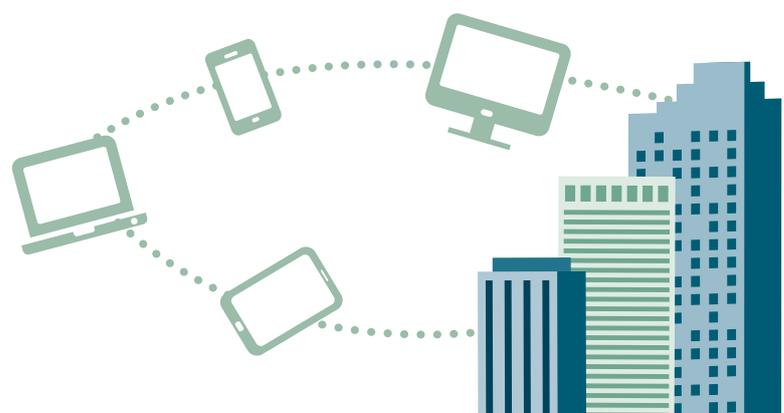
References

[1] Accenture 2015 Citizen Pulse Survey

[2] Growth hacker: "a person whose true north is growth. Everything they do is scrutinized by its potential impact on scalable growth." Sean Ellis. (June 26, 2010). "Find a Growth Hacker for Your Startup". Startup-Marketing.com.

[3] https://www.verksamt.se/eugo

[4] Accenture Digital Citizen Survey 2015

[5] https://www.enterpriseone.gov.sg/

[6] 'Open Data Strategy for Europe, is expected to deliver a €40 billion boost to the EU's economy each year.' Digital Agenda: Turning Government Data into Gold. 12/12/11. European Commission press release, http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-11-1524_en.htm

[7] Free Companies House data to boost UK economy. 15/07/14. UK Government. https://www.gov.uk/government/news/free-companies-house-data-to-boost-uk-economy

[8] Verksamt.se Nya datamängder på verksamt.se, Press Release, 8 December 2014, https://www.verksamt.se/om-verksamt/nyhetsarkiv/-/journal_content/56_INSTANCE_0LpMHH7zZQ6q/10183/NYHET_NYA_DATAMANGDER

Methodology

'Corporate Formalities: Research on Maturity of Digital Service Delivery across six countries', Accenture Research

Accenture evaluated the current state of digital at national Regulatory and Licensing agencies in six countries (France, Sweden, United Kingdom, Singapore, Australia, and United States) plus 12 US States. Findings were analysed across five categories: digital maturity of service delivery, digital engagement, collaboration, strategy and innovation.

If you would like to know more about the research please contact Mark Howard.

Contact Us

Mark Howard
Global Public Service Administration and Regulatory Lead
mark.h.howard@accenture.com
Connect with Mark on LinkedIn
Follow Mark on Twitter @markhoward_CO

See our previous perspective: Be Like a Business Not Bad for Business: Lessons Regulatory Agencies Must learn from the Businesses they Regulate

Connect with us to learn more on delivering public service for the future. Follow us on Twitter @AccenturePubSvc and LinkedIn

About Delivering Public Service for the Future

What does it take to deliver public service for the future? Public service leaders must embrace four structural shifts—advancing toward personalized services, insight-driven operations, a public entrepreneurship mindset and a cross-agency commitment to mission productivity. By making these shifts, leaders can support flourishing societies, safe, secure nations and economic vitality for citizens in a digital world — delivering public service for the future.

About Accenture

Accenture is a global management consulting, technology services and outsourcing company, with more than 336,000 people serving clients in more than 120 countries. Combining unparalleled experience, comprehensive capabilities across all industries and business functions, and extensive research on the world's most successful companies, Accenture collaborates with clients to help them become high-performance businesses and governments. The company generated net revenues of US$30.0 billion for the fiscal year ended Aug. 31, 2014. Its home page is www.accenture.com.

15-3038