The case for a digital government

How mobile do New Zealanders want their government services to be?
Accenture’s country managing director, New Zealand Justin Gray outlined to Management why consumers want mobility from the public service.

Why does Accenture believe governments must go mobile?
Today’s citizens use their mobile devices consistently throughout the day, and commercial organisations have responded quickly to consumers’ demands for mobile experiences, setting the bar high. Consequently, citizens have very high expectations of how public service mobile sites and apps should look, perform, and make their life easier.

Implementing further use of mobile communications will create a world-class digital user experience, where digital government can have a tangible impact on citizen satisfaction and engagement. More personalised and immediate, the mobile channel is an opportunity that public services can’t afford to get wrong. Creating a great mobile experience is a key step in providing a seamless, multi-platform experience that engages and delights citizens.

What are consumers expecting from their governments?
In 2014, an Accenture Public Services Pulse Survey found that 73 percent of citizens expected the same or higher quality from government digital services as from commercial organisations. In the most recent survey – just two years later – that number surged to 85 percent. The reality is that these digital consumers are also “digital citizens” and have similar expectations of their governments to provide dramatic changes in the way they operate and offer high quality digital services while delivering value for money.

What is happening overseas?
There are some great examples of public services agencies in the US using mobile technology to better interact with citizens. For example, the City of Detroit and several other US government agencies are leveraging the mobile app SeeClickFix as a platform for citizens to report non-emergency issues like potholes. Governments can therefore use the SeeClickFix platform to track, manage and reply to citizen-reported issues. This enables easy two-way communication between the public service and the citizens that focus on providing input on tangible problems in the community.

Can you outline any countries that are doing particularly well?
Britain is leading the way in providing e-government and mobile services to its citizens. For instance, Britain has introduced a Chief Information Officers Council to operate alongside the e-government unit of the Cabinet Office and the Office of Government Commerce. This team was formed to transform online service delivery and focus on making it citizens-centred, as well as enable greater self-service and ease of access.

In the 2016 UN E-Government Survey, Britain was ranked first out of all countries for e-government capabilities. According to the UN, between 2014 and 2016, their e-government service progression went from simply publishing information to offering basic interactions, (e.g., e-forms), to full transactional capability (e.g., filing and processing tax returns, welfare benefits, passports, etc.) and to a more complete transformation and reform of public sector online operations and public service delivery.

How does the NZ government rate so far?
New Zealand is already a world leader in providing e-government and mobile services to its citizens. In the UN E-Government survey, New Zealand was ranked eighth in the world for e-government and digital services. Implementing further mobile strategies will enable New Zealand to increase its cross-channel performance and maintain its world leading position. The Government is also taking very positive steps towards enabling greater mobile capabilities for its citizens with the mobile blackspot funding which will enable mobile coverage for further remote locations in the county. This demonstrates our government is constantly thinking towards a mobile future, which is a great sign.

What more could it be doing?
New Zealand government agencies should utilise a research-led approach to generate rich insights that can then spark innovations. By considering the entire ecosystem around them, government agencies will get an outside-in view of the people in the ecosystem, the places in which the service is experienced, the products used by everyone, the processes that people follow and the performance. They should co-design and co-create with citizen services tailored to life stage, needs, entitlements and responsibilities – open legislative processes to enable the community to vote or engage digitally with their political representatives.

The New Zealand government should also develop a national digital strategy with a clear roadmap that is continually tested and reviewed to ensure it is achieving the relevant outcomes.