E-Government solutions as instruments to qualify the public sector for the specific needs of small and medium sized enterPRISEs (SMEs) in the rural BSR

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Public Authorities’ E-Goverment Services for Enterprises-
The Swedish Experience

on behalf of

egoprise project community

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Final Report

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Interviews: authority representatives – name of the organizations – respondents position

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I.1 Introduction

The following study is based mainly on in-depth interviews with entrepreneurs and public authorities but also draws on a survey of approximately 200 respondents. It analyses how Swedish public authorities have customized their e-government services, highlighting the related strengths and challenges in the enterprise context. The study was funded by the European Union and the Baltic Sea Region Programme INTERREG IV and assisted by the Egoprise project partners. We want to express a special thanks to the lead partner for constructive comments that helped us refine the final version of this chapter. To sum up, this chapter focuses on Sweden as a partner of the Baltic Sea Region (BSR) programme supporting the Egoprise project.

The programme considers e-government a tool for improving the quality of services provided by public authorities to small and medium-sized enterprises in rural areas of the Baltic Sea Region (http://www.egoprise.eu/). Egoprise aims:
- to promote e-government to make public administrations more customer focused
- to make public administrations more efficient
- to help public administrations develop customer-friendly processes

An underlying insight informing programme implementation is that e-government optimizes the work of public administrations and helps them save time and money. Moreover, e-government can help companies save time and money, while customer-oriented e-government can strengthen a region’s economic performance. Finally, SMEs can boost their innovative capacity by networking with research establishments.

The qualitative study presented in this chapter highlights the gaps between SME needs/expectations regarding e-government services and existing conditions and, in so doing, comes up with new ideas for improving interactions between public sector and businesses.

I.2 Methodological considerations

This study is based mainly on in-depth interviews. Four representatives of different authorities, all closely involved in their authorities’ implementation of e-government for enterprises, were interviewed. Competence in e-government matters was a mandatory criterion when selecting these interviewees. In addition, eight in-depth telephone interviews were conducted with SME representatives. SMEs are defined as companies with up to 250 full-time employees in total/year. The representatives were carefully selected to ensure that they were in charge of company contacts with authorities. The SMEs selected had to be located all over the country, and an effort was made to cover various economic sectors.

Semi-structured interview guides were used for the interview part of the study. The common structure of the interview guides was developed by the Egoprise consortium. You can find the interview guides at http://egoprise.eu/moodle/course/view.php?id=4. The items in the guide were partly open-ended, though tailored to the cases’ specific contexts, to foster a broader understanding of the answers received. This is in accordance with a qualitative method approach recommended by qualitative researchers as Gummesson (2000) and Yin (2009) among others.
Regarding the project aims, the focus of the qualitative study was on highlighting the gaps between SME needs/expectations regarding e-government services and existing conditions and on finding new ideas for improving interactions between the public sector and businesses. As Grönroos (2002, 115–116) explains, a gap analysis helps identify the causes of various quality problems. Grönroos distinguishes between problems of functional versus technical quality, the former referring to intangible end-user values while the latter refers to tangible supplier values.

Regarding the expert interviews conducted in Sweden in 2009 on behalf of Egoprise, the authorities in Sweden versus in other countries focus more on functional quality than on technology. This can be partially explained by differences in culture and IT maturity, as described by Inglehart and Welsel (2005, p. 63 ff). In a context in which IT is highly mature, IT development is not seen from a technical perspective but from a functional end-user perspective, as described by Grönroos (2002). This leads to different approaches in different regions and means that IT solutions must be implemented differently from region to region. In some regions, the improvement of technical applications requires the implementation of functional quality. If new technical solutions are not followed by functional solutions in those regions, the user will make no use of the new technological applications. A first step towards a functional quality approach is teaching staff about functional quality and its consequences.

To enable a gap analysis in this study, the authorities’ responses were compared with the SMEs’ responses to the same items. However, when conducting the expert interviews, it became obvious that Swedish government agencies are highly customer oriented in that they responded to the questions in terms of functional quality, i.e., they focused on intangible end-user values. It was therefore not meaningful to apply a quantitative approach in the Swedish study.

Approximately 200 respondents were surveyed. The results were interpreted and indications of tendencies were identified, though we do not claim that statistical significance was achieved (the statistical significance of the material is a matter of interpretation). For a better holistic overview, the sub-contractor that conducted the survey has visualized the survey output using graphics; these are available in a separate document on the Egoprise homepage: www.egoprise.eu. The survey that investigates SME perspectives is to be considered complementary, while the open-ended quality-focused questions in the survey were a priority. The outcome strengthens the results of the in-depth interviews with SME representatives. The results are all based on interpretations arrived at via a hermeneutical spiral process, in which the researcher is an inter-subjective tool. The approach is described in detail in Gummesson (2000).

1.3 About the study

The empirical data and the conclusions drawn from them are reported as follows:

1) Interviews with SMEs and summary of interviews with SMEs

2) Results survey and summary open-ended questions survey
3) Interviews with authority representatives and summary interviews with authority representatives

4) Gap analysis

5) Conclusions, recommendations, and new ideas about improving interactions between the public sector and businesses

Respondent names are anonymized in the report to ensure confidentiality and focus attention on the data themselves. The interviews with authority representatives were all conducted in June–July 2010 and with SME representatives in September 2010. To facilitate reading, the interview dates are not specified when quoting respondents. The survey was conducted in September 2011. To harmonize with the empirical paragraphs in this text, the survey results are being presented in body text.

1.4 1) Interviews with SMEs

1. Irene

Irene feels that the Swedish government agency websites that are relevant to her are fine, and that the e-services are well designed. She has no opinion on how they could be improved. In her view, digital services are generally fine as long as there is a “real” person with whom customers can chat and from whom they can obtain accurate information about regulations. She also wishes that government agencies would indicate on their websites whether the company needs to contact any other agencies regarding the specific matter at hand and, if so, which ones. This is not currently the case. In that sense the interplay between the agencies is poor, as she puts it. A one-stop shop could help to eliminate unnecessary interfaces. She feels that this could also solve many problems having to do with providing general information, and in cases in which multiple agencies are involved.

She also feels that the agencies “can have as many websites as they want, as long as there is a direct number at which you can contact an expert who knows what things apply and is sure to be able to answer your question”. For instance, it is not enough for such an agent to have only general tax knowledge, and therefore to have to refer more complex questions to someone else. Being passed from one civil servant to the next just creates a great deal of extra work and expense for a business owner. Customers are often forced to wait in long phone queues, only to eventually be referred elsewhere. “A ton of time is spent in conversation, but it isn’t productive”. In a similar vein, Irene feels that social media are fine if they can help her as a business owner to get the right information. The company hires berry-pickers from Thailand through a Thai staffing firm. Irene is pleased with how the Swedish Migration Board handles such cases, and feels that this has to do with the fact that the Migration Board receives around a thousand such applications every season. Had the Board not created routines and put on extra resources, its workload would be insupportable. She finds that the situation is different when it comes to cases involving the company’s own employees. It is often bothersome, and business owners don’t have the option of giving up because, as Irene says, “you have to fear the Tax Agency after all”. It is frustrating to be unable to obtain personal help directly, and to be given inaccurate information.

2. Nelson
Nelson does not see any bottlenecks in agency routines or in poorly designed e-services. He believes that the explanation for the often-devastating delays is simple: politics and/or ignorance. He cites two problems from the not-too-distant past as examples. The first example comes from within the EU. Nelson feels that it’s great that now, when you recruit German workers, you no longer need to have a corporation to hire them. The hired consultants can work from Germany, staying in their own country, without the Swedish employer having a subsidiary there. This is good in two respects: 1) the annoying, time-consuming and resource-intensive element of creating a corporation is eliminated, and 2) the result is that European countries have come much closer to the situation that exists in the USA. The EU is closer to having a more efficient internal market. “Here the problem is that the government agencies do not have the necessary knowledge; they don’t know how things work. We have experience from one case in which we needed to educate the government agencies (both German and Swedish). Neither countries’ agencies had the necessary knowledge”.

In the other case it was impossible to reach a decision about labour from outside the EU because the union had veto power and always used it. He and his employees were forced to prove that there was no one in the domestic labour market that could take the job. However, the union did not have the necessary competence. “How can you prove to someone who isn’t knowledgeable that you need a Java programmer? Java, they wonder, what sort of coffee is that?” He concludes by noting that multinational companies such as Ericsson have an easier time of it; they can bring in competent people from a subsidiary and thereby avoid time-consuming procedures in getting work permits granted.

3. Steve

Steve’s company is an international digital creative agency. It has employees of eight nationalities drawn from both inside and outside the EU. Steve believes that there are major differences between hiring inside the EU and hiring outside it, in that it is often more complicated than one might think to hire people from outside the EU. He finds that there is plenty of information on the government agencies’ websites if, as a business owner, you have the time to delve deeply into what is required in a given case. He cites an example: he was working with an agency in Japan that wanted to send a “guy” to Sweden for a six-month internship, only to find that a work permit was actually required for that. Even though the man will not be working for Steve, but rather interning, Steve found after some time-consuming searching through the information on the websites of various government agencies that he must still see to it that the intern has a work permit. He finds that some things become very involved because the government agencies’ websites are actually just portals to a number of forms and links, while at the same time there is an incredible amount of information about regulations, laws and rules. In the final analysis the company found that there is actually only one form for the intern’s case. They have not found any information on the Migration Board site telling them exactly what they have to do. Steve says that to avoid having to wait in long phone queues, they have tried to find the information themselves, but ultimately they had to call the Migration Board after all.

...if you have the time to sit down and spend time with them. Well, we live in a world where you might not have that kind of time.
He adds that, because time is often short, people sometimes take chances. Nevertheless, the most important e-services that Steve’s company has used in connection with migration issues are information search functions and form downloads. The incentive for using e-services is that they are fast and easy when they work. Most importantly, he notes that:

...we’re sitting in front of the computer anyhow.

He feels that digital management of all paperwork, including the option of using digital signatures, should be the rule, out of respect for the business owners’ time, as well as the foreign workers’ time. He feels that just the ability to download forms is not enough. On the other hand, he explains that managing the entire process digitally would cut down on case processing times and make things easier. Steve notes that applications must currently go by regular post, which led in one case to the granted application being sent to the applicant’s address in his homeland, even though he was en route to Sweden. If the response had been sent digitally, he could have gotten it regardless of his geographical location. Moreover, if the entire application process could have been handled digitally, including Steve’s signature confirming that he really was considering hiring the foreign worker, the entire process would have had more reasonable time margins.

He sees no problems or disadvantages associated with logging in and providing signatures by means of a Digipass. He appreciates not having to identify himself and sign documents in the traditional manner, and always uses a Digipass whenever it is available. However, he could undoubtedly imagine using biometric identification; he thinks that would be the optimum approach from a security standpoint as well. However, he does have a bit of trouble grasping how it would work from a purely technical standpoint: “Would you have to carry some sort of box with you, or what?” On the other hand, he doesn’t think that having to provide a fingerprint is, as he puts it, “anything that people react to when they’re checking their luggage at the airport here in Sweden; you just stick out your thumb, there’s nothing to it”. He doesn’t think that it would be perceived as an invasion of privacy.

When asked if he has any ideas as to what e-services could be offered in addition to those presently available, Steve responds that he would like to see personal contact. He says that he knows that it is very easy to provide such contact through web services, as his job involves just such practices.

He doesn’t know if much is being done, from an information standpoint, for business owners by government agencies at the municipal level, such as inviting companies to evening information sessions. He feels that:

...they may do them, even though they don’t seem to be of interest to us. After all, everything is so optimized today that you don’t have time to go to information sessions. At least not in my world.

He believes that if you have the information in front of you, you will obtain as much relevant information as possible, and as quickly as possible. He adds that, if questions arise, as in the case involving the intern, it should be easy to call and get a concrete answer. He indicates that it often happens that he checks on things through his contacts, not necessarily official
business-owner networks but informal ones, asking whether anyone has done “this sort of thing before”.

He does not think it is possible to design a one-stop shop involving all the government agencies that would pertain solely to migration, although he does find the concept attractive from a business owner’s perspective. It would be technically “right” for the agencies to have a common website where one could click down to the appropriate agency, even if there are areas where the agencies flow into one another.

4. Wendela

Epsilon Consultancy and Expertise in Technology and Systems Development has a total of 1200 employees in a Group comprising 15 companies. The company was started in 2001, and is a service company that supplies technical engineers for training and cutting-edge expertise.

Personnel Manager Wendela is one of the two people who work in the HR department. She reports that they have no more than “a handful” of employees – three or four – from foreign countries (migrants). She has been in contact with the Social Insurance Office, the Tax Agency and the Migration Board in connection with these recordings. She feels that it takes a long time to process such cases, and that this is troublesome for the company as its customers need to get help from the company’s consultants quickly. They cannot wait.

She finds that the Migration Board takes the longest time. She adds that because the Board works so slowly, Epsilon is unable to get service contracts with customers in place. A customer may lose patience and turn to one of Epsilon’s competitors in the global market. It has been her experience that state enterprises often take their time, and that the civil servants at the government agencies have difficulty handling the things they have to do. She doubts whether the public sector offers sufficient incentives for its agencies to become more efficient, but she thinks it would be great to be able to track the various steps in the case management process so that she could make a clear determination.

When asked whether she finds it difficult to use government agencies’ e-services, she responds that everyone at the company likes IT and technology, and that she can envision no context in which she would have any hesitation about using e-services. She sees only the possibilities, but is clear about the fact that Epsilon is careful in terms of confidentiality, which is important. As long as confidentiality is safeguarded and guaranteed, she could see herself signing documents by means of, for instance, a Digipass. She could imagine using e-services throughout the process, in part because she feels that it is great to have all the documents (all in digital form) in a single location. She says that, within the company, they have designed their information base in such a way that it is consolidated, which makes it easy to get information. She says that they work a great deal with the Internet, for instance, storing all their HR cases at a single “virtual” site within their internal digital environment. She would like to have only digital interfaces outwardly as well; for example, she appreciates that there is a smooth process for sick-listing oneself digitally at the Social Insurance Agency.

Wendela feels that, generally speaking, all the government agencies take a long time to process cases. She stresses that the Social Insurance Agency is much, much more difficult to
get hold of than other agencies, and that while the Tax Agency has a better sounding board, help desk and the like, the case management processes “are pretty much the same between the two agencies”.

She says that the help received on the telephone varies a great deal from one time to the next, and most importantly she finds it bothersome that she usually has to call so many entities. When it comes to the websites, she finds that the information is too dispersed and takes a long time to find. She finds that you often end up back where you started, that you have to call many entities and agencies with the same question. She feels that, at present, each agency does its own job, and that the customer sometimes gets different answers, depending on which agency has been asked. That is why she believes that a one-stop shop could facilitate matters by providing a database in which everything would be centralized so that it would be possible, for instance, to search out information about a customer’s case. If things were organized this way, it would also be much easier to provide the customer with information about the status of his case and how long the rest of the case management process will take. She adds that there is no such search function at present, and that as a customer she must instead always telephone and ask questions. She feels that the personal contact could be eliminated entirely with regard to questions about the progress of a case if there were a common, user-friendly database available; with it, customers could handle their inquiries entirely on their own.

She sees no disadvantages in being able, as a customer, to search straight to a case herself. She feels that she could generally do with personal contact being the exception, as long as the information on the existing websites was good. Anyone with a concrete question could then pose it directly by phone and get a concrete and reliable answer straightaway. She comprehends the creation of service-designed e-services as one of the future challenges facing the government agencies. One way to interpret this is that the existing e-services are inadequate in terms of service design.

Wendela believes that communities could serve as a fine complement to the government agencies’ joint service-designed e-service at a one-stop shop. She supposes that her company is not often invited to information seminars on migrant issues because it does not have many migrant employees. As far as she knows, there are no digital forums in her field, nor is she aware of any professional chat rooms having to do with jobs and recruitment.

To conclude, Wendela feels that the solution with regard to coordination numbers for migrants and the attendant circumstances create a “sort of catch 22”. She explains that it takes too long to get a coordination number, so migrants cannot open a bank account, rent a flat, get their children into day care, etc. She elaborates by noting that once the coordination number is finally received, the migrants discover that, for instance, the bank has a certain processing time as well. Her proposed solution, which she uses personally, for handling the necessary government agency contacts in the correct order is to search using non-commercial search services such as FAQs and forums. She means that the government agencies could post such user-friendly information on their websites.

5. Evelyne
Alverbacks Blommor is an expanding corporation with 50 employees, and has been in existence since 1968. Personnel and Finance Manager Evelyne reports that the company uses large numbers of seasonal employees from Poland and Latvia for short periods of time. Their contracts can run for three months. “We encounter recurring problems with the processing times, when the registration process doesn’t get completed and we have to wait a long time”. Work permits are not necessary, but the Social Insurance Agency takes time. Tax certificates and Social Insurance Agency documents have to be submitted as soon as the workers come to Sweden from Poland, while registering with the Migration Board can take up to three months. As a result, the company sees to it that the employees fill out forms as soon as they arrive in Sweden, so that the documents for registering them with the various government agencies are put into the pipeline immediately.

If the workers fail to register they don’t get a coordination number, which is why employers keep after these employees to fill out their application documents and send them to them. Evelyne finds that they get the coordination numbers through the Tax Agency fairly quickly. The coordination number is needed to apply for an A-tax certificate. The company, in turn, has to pay tax, which means that the A-tax certificate is a document that plays a key role. One interpretation of this is that the Tax Agency has an interest in getting A-tax from the company as soon as possible, and has consequently designed routines that shorten the lead times in the process.

Evelyne says that, as a rule, e-services are downloaded from government agencies’ websites, but that some are not downloadable, in which case she copies them manually. She notes as an example that the application for preliminary A-tax cannot be printed out from a website. She feels that the agencies could make many other things more efficient to facilitate matters for Alverbacks Blommor, as the same personnel and same routines apply to those who arrive, whether or not they establish residency in Sweden. She feels that it is odd whenever their seasonal workers need to go to hospital and the health-care staff tell them that it will cost two thousand kronor when those workers are entitled by law to health care on the same terms as Swedes, all because the Social Insurance Agency has failed to process the case to its conclusion, despite several months having passed. She points out what a shame it is that many of the company’s seasonal workers have already returned to their homeland by the time the Social Insurance Agency’s decision is finally handed down.

Evelyne finds that it still requires the company’s time if any of the seasonal workers should happen to need health care. An interpreter is generally needed, and someone from the company has to accompany them, but she feels that it is a waste of valuable time having to sit down and make several phone calls just because a government agency’s routines are too slow. When asked whether she was advised to telephone the government agencies or if was possible to track the progress of the case on the web, she indicates that it can only be done by phone, and that she still has a way to go because, as she puts it, you can’t trust the civil servants because they don’t know enough. She feels that reliable specialists are needed, adding that the individual cases are often complicated, which means they require a great deal of knowledge.

She has this to say regarding the extra workload that poorly designed e-services entail for a “hosting company”:
You shouldn’t have to do the work, but in purely practical terms just providing forms to the seasonal workers that come in doesn’t work. You have to have control as an employer.

Evelyne elaborates on the problems by noting that some workers understand Swedish, others not a word, and they are different. She finds that workers’ language skills vary a great deal overall. She notes that information in their native language is not available from all the agencies, which means in practice that the workers come here and then, as she puts it, she has to “fix” the rest. Seasonal workers are recruited through networks, through which Alverbacks gets recommendations from previous employees. Familiarity with IT varies among the applicants, ranging from those who are highly skilled to those who are totally unskilled, and Evelyne stresses that it is not her job to search for them, and that in principle it is they who should be doing the searching.

In Evelyne’s experience, the Tax Agency takes several months to issue a tax demand form. She notes that the company has meetings within the security industry, and that the Tax Agency puts on evening information sessions, etc. She thinks that it might be possible to conduct such meetings digitally, on the web.

6. Dorothy

The Icehotel, Hotel Made of Ice and Snow, is a subsidiary of a corporation in the experience industry. Dorothy (financial and personnel manager) is responsible for 30 employees. The company was established in the 1980s and has been in existence for 20 years. It has some 40 employees in all, including artists. It has plans for future expansion.

Dorothy reports that the hotel does not often bring in staff from the Baltic countries, Eastern Europe, or the rest of the EU because most of the guests are Swedes, so the staff must be able to speak fluent Swedish. Those employees who do come from the EU often apply independently and ask if there are any jobs. If hiring becomes an issue, the company does have a system for contacting government agencies, primarily the Tax Agency.

When it comes to the artists, the government agencies’ routines differ depending on whether the artist comes from the EU or some other part of the world. For instance, a Japanese artist has to have a work permit before he/she comes to Sweden. Dorothy has also established routines with government agencies to obtain work permits more quickly for artists that the company wants to have come and work at the hotel.

A list comes from the selection panel, from which we then pick who is to come. We send information out to those who are to be hired, collecting and sending out forms for visa applications, forms from the Tax Agency, etc. We fill in as much of each form as we can, then send them to the individuals in question. The individuals then submit their materials at the appropriate embassy.

Dorothy cannot say how long it takes to get a permit for an employee outside the EU, but the selections are made in the spring, and the work permits are usually granted and in hand by the time the contract with the artists begins to run. She believes that the employer needs to fill in the contact information. She does not experience any major problems with the
formal procedure within the EU. She finds that Swedish government agencies respond “fairly quickly”; for example, it takes three weeks to get a response from the Migration Board. In her experience, agencies within the EU usually take about a month, which she considers to be astonishingly fast. Agencies outside the EU take longer, with the result that Dorothy sometimes has to stay on top of the Migration Board so that they will expedite matters. It used to be possible to get help from the Swedish Public Employment Service in expediting the process, and she is sorry that this is no longer the case.

Dorothy thinks it would be wonderful to be able to sign documents online. The people in her company are accustomed to using e-services, and find that they achieve varying degrees of success in finding information on government agency websites. She finds the Tax Agency and the Swedish Public Employment Service to be excellent, but feels that the Migration Board is a mess. She finds the information there to be unstructured, and information and forms are difficult to find. She also thinks that it would facilitate matters if the artists could have information sheets sent directly from the Migration Board, so that the company, as an employer, would not have to provide them with all the information. Dorothy notes that some information and some forms are currently available only in English. She finds that some applicants know English, but not all of them. If Dorothy is unable to find information online, she feels frustrated and calls the agency, but believes that the process would work without such personal contact if the design of the government agencies’ online services were properly thought out and user-friendly. She is favourably disposed towards a single joint website for all government agencies (one-stop shop).

She thinks it would facilitate matters if it were possible to manage all the documents digitally. She would like to avoid having to download and submit hard copies, but supposes that this “wish list” service would founder because some countries want to work with original documents. She feels that that’s a shame, as she believes that e-services could expedite the case management process. In her experience, there are some foreign government agencies that do submit documents to the Migration Board digitally. It may be, then, that it is not the technology that is holding back the feasibility of such solutions. As she sees it, government agencies (domestic and foreign) should generally prefer digital documents, as they serve as their own “backup”; original hard-copy documents, in contrast, have no “backup” to replace them in the event that they get lost.

Dorothy does not think evening information sessions regarding new regulations are necessary, nor has she ever turned to other companies that are in similar situations to obtain information. She has instead always taken matters into her own hands whenever she has needed to find out what any new regulations apply to, and whenever questions have arisen.

7. Eric

Eric is a building contractor who hires Polish construction workers through a Polish construction company. Because the terms of employment for these workers are tied to a Polish company in Poland, the only agency Eric needs to contact is the Swedish Tax Agency. He feels that they (i.e., the Tax Agency):
...have a peculiarity: if you fill in a single number wrong, they won’t process the case, then they take...now their processing time is 23 days. When they started out doing these they took 10 days, and now they’re up to 23, and that’s a bit long. First I have to wait for the money from the person I have done the job for, and only then can I submit my documents to the Tax Agency, and then I have to wait for 23 days, which means that I’m up to 30 days right from the start, so that means I’m up to 53 days, and that’s a bloody long time, but if my paperwork isn’t complete then it ends up in a pile on some case manager’s desk along with other uncompleted cases. If they had digital correspondence they could quickly get back to me and ask me to supplement with this or that, and we could make corrections, and that would facilitate matters tremendously.

Eric feels that managing cases digitally would have expedited the process, and that everyone involved would have benefited. He feels that the case management process in the building sector works well otherwise, except that there is no two-way communication. Eric is “absolutely” in favour of the ability to handle contacts, company-specific matters and signatures for agencies by means of a Digipass or some similar login process. He believes that “the fewer things you need to print out and send by post, the better it is for everyone”. He has little faith in forums for business owners, as he feels that the construction industry is too conservative. Information is retrieved via existing networks, which in his case were established while he was at school.

8. Nicolas

Grundnäs AB hires butchers from Poland. Nicolas (personnel and finance manager) says that in the present situation they can download forms from the Internet, and then both he and the prospective employee have to sign and assemble ID documents. This takes 15 minutes. Then they have to submit the documents by snail mail and wait to hear back a week later. He feels that the waiting time of one week is fine, but he would have used an all-digital solution if one had been offered (i.e., one in which both parties submit documents via the web and sign them digitally). Nicolas is of the opinion that progress is too slow at many government agencies, and he would prefer to be able to sign documents online. It would make complete sense for him to provide a unique signature via the Internet. He doesn’t understand what the problem is at the government agencies; in his view, they could learn from the banks, which have led the way in the industry. Nicolas himself is a regular user of the digital services offered by the banks. He thinks that it would be good to simplify things and avoid having “to keep ten codes in your head”. He finds that there is a great deal to keep track of, and he thinks it should be easier, without having to sacrifice security, given that new devices to solve such problems are always emerging. He would have no problem signing by means of a fingerprint. As he sees it, there is a great deal to be said for a fingerprint, a smart card, something that you insert into the computer. It could be a chip with your identity, with which you pay bills or report changes in personal circumstances to the Tax Agency instead of using company signatories or signatory rights. He also believes that when it comes to security, once you’ve signed you can save it on the computer so that it’s secure. When asked how things stand in terms of getting information from government agencies about their e-services and how easy it is to find things on their sites, Nicolas responds that it varies from agency to agency, and that the Tax Agency is the best and the Social Insurance Agency is the worst, while the Migration Board is good enough. He finds that the agencies
are good at posting information about new changes, but that you have to search it out yourself. Nearly everything is posted on the websites. The foreign workers stay for three to four months, and each time they return they have to register with the Tax Agency to get a coordination number so that they can then get a health insurance number. Because Grundnäs AB has never been affected by illnesses among its foreign personnel, Nicolas does not know whether the insurance number is really adequate in the event of an illness or accident. He has personally had bad experiences with the Social Insurance Agency, and finds their routines cumbersome. He also refers to a newspaper article that identified problems with the Social Insurance Agency, and thinks that they may have an organizational problem – in that they don’t know what they’re supposed to be doing. He feels that the government agencies have generally abandoned large parts of the country and are concentrating around the university towns, where they have to be active. Nicolas feels that this is devastating for some agencies, such as the Swedish Public Employment Service, as it is difficult to maintain satisfactory contact with the unemployed by telephone and e-mail. Nicolas believes that, by abandoning their local knowledge and concentrating on urban areas, the government agencies are losing competence and experience with respect to rural areas and entities. He feels that private persons (such as himself) and companies that work in sparsely populated areas will soon be crippled because they don’t have the agencies in place that could help and support the migrants.

Nicolas does not know whether there are any communities or other networks among business owners through which they can support one another. He notes that the Tax Agency and Social Insurance Agency offer evening information sessions, which he attends when he has the time. He feels that these are sometimes very rewarding, other times less so, but that one cannot retrieve all the information from the web by oneself. According to Nicolas, there is no good or reliable knowledge either. Because he is not on Facebook, as he feels that he is too old-fashioned for that, he doesn’t believe in the idea of networking with other business owners to learn about government agencies’ rules and routines. Nicolas formerly worked at the Tax Agency, dealing with both individuals and the business community, and finds it difficult to say whether it would be undignified for government agencies to be on social media.

In conclusion, Nicolas feels that personal contact is important, and that agencies must not lose it. Instead of pushing buttons to advance through a phone queue, he says he would rather reach a real person if he needs to call and ask a question quickly.

Summary: interviews with SMEs

All the respondents have in on one way or another expressed a need for personal contact to facilitate the handling of their own business concerns. The results imply, according to the SME representatives, that the technical quality of the authorities’ e-service was satisfactory, while the functional quality was not.

I.5 2) Survey results

In total 171 individuals answered to the question if they use e-government services. 141 do, 25 don’t and one doesn’t, but intends to. Answering the question, how easy it is to use the
e-government services, the majority finds it easy or think that average efforts are required. In total, 139 individuals responded to the question, whether there are there are e-government services that need to be improved. 114 answered yes, 25 answered no. Responses to the question about how the company benefits from using e-government services indicate that e-government services lead mainly to following benefits:

1. reductions/savings of costs in our internal administrative and financial dealings
2. flexible availability of services (7 days per week, 24 hours per day) and
3. fast and comfortable service delivery

Respondents who answered to the question, “Why do you not use e-government services in your company?” reveal that there either is no need for such service in electronic channels or, if there is need, they prefer face-to-face-transactions.

The question: “What disadvantages does your company see in using e-government services?” points out following tendency: lack of personal communication is understood as a major disadvantage. Open answers to the same question as follows:

“When the Tax Agency gives tremendously different answers, you get confused and it’s very difficult to find the exact service”.
“No exchange of ideas”.
“Top-down perspective”.
“In the cases, you need answers that can’t be pre-programmed; personal contact is an obvious need”.
“E-services are only superior regarding obvious routine-questions”.

The open responses to the item, “Please specify these e-government services and how they could be improved”, indicated a demand for customer orientation. The following are selected responses:

“Most of the services must be adapted to the end users”.
“Need to customer-orient the services”.
“More languages or easier Swedish”.
“Information, on how to use the e-services is often missing”.
“Where tax authorities have an enormous number of choices, it’s confusing and difficult to locate the exact service”.
“In some cases, there should be more space for open-ended text in the digital forms”.
“Generally public sector can be improved”.
“Technical problems at high loads”.
“Agency’s difficulties with broadband – sometimes it doesn’t work. Connection is failing”.

Summary: open-ended question survey

Though better functional quality is required in e-services, face-to-face interaction and personal contact are preferred.
3) Interviews with authority representatives

One interview was conducted with a representative from The Swedish Tax Agency, which is a national authority, in charge of tax issues, administration, and civil registration. The agency also issues ID-cards. The officer interviewed is Process Coordinator for Population Registration.

One interview was done with a representative from the Stockholm Business Region Development, which provides professional assistance to foreign investor planning to establish or expand business operation in Stockholm. The interviewed is Project Manager for Business Services.

When planning the interview with the The Swedish Migration Board (it is the authority, which receives applications from people wishing to visit or settle in Sweden), it was recommended to include both the Chief Project Manager for E-migration and the Web Editor and the Development Officer for Information Web, Communication Activities in the study. This is why two interviews were conducted with the Migration Board.

Eve, the Process Coordinator for Population Registration of the Swedish Tax Agency, believes that she has a good chance of influencing the development of the Agency’s e-government services. Evaluation of the e-service design process revealed that e-government users are highly satisfied with the service. The main factors influencing the actual use and advantages or disadvantages of e-government services are generational in nature, she claims: “Age does matter”. In continuously improving their existing services, the Tax Agency is revising its website, striving for greater interactivity. The greatest efficiency improvements are being made in interactive services, as these save money, she adds. Eve observes that one public e-service that needs further development is biometric identification to ensure user identity, although the e-legitimation of personal signatures already functions well. “In ten years we will consider routines from 2010 very old-fashioned. We’ll laugh at former routines. We’ll have intelligent e-services”. Eve predicts that new e-services will be even more interactive and more individually customized than those currently offered, and should make electronic interaction and communication with the officer more convenient (this refers to her suggestion concerning the “packaging” rather than the content of the service). Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are highly motivated to use e-government services, Eve says, and often request additional personal contact. This is why supplementary assistance is offered to SMEs regarding relevant tax matters, she adds. An important consideration when developing or upgrading public e-service is fast turnaround of SME cases. As an example of best practice, Eve cites the use of e-legitimation in following up individual customer cases and the possibility of targeting individually relevant matters only, further arguing that redundant information ought to be eliminated. She says she is not familiar with what major factors and obstacles influence SME internationalization, but mentions that there are e-government services to handle cross-border activities, referring to the STORK project. STORK helps ensure that people deregister in the country they are leaving when moving within the EU to a different country. Communication secured by e-identification is needed to support cross-border activities, she adds. However, Eve has no experience of SME’s recruitment of foreigners. However, she continues, the Agency has considerable experience using e-services
for recruitment purposes, as online registration is mandatory for all work permit applicants. She stresses that registration services, including via e-government, are continuously being upgraded. In particular, the Agency is encouraging the use of on-line services by SMEs, intending to employ foreigners. However, the tax authorities offer no business service platforms, digital greenhouses, or digital meeting points for SMEs. Eve considers “one-stop shop” websites too large an issue, but as she could not cite any good examples of one-stop shops or digital greenhouses, tax authorities may not have seriously examined the field.

Disa, Project Manager for Business Services at the Stockholm Business Region (SBR), believes that she has a very good chance of influencing the development of e-government services because she is involved in a business and political network. She believes that SMEs are making good use of the opportunities offered by e-government services, partly because entrepreneurs are usually experienced in IT. As examples of improved e-government services, she cites services offering individual guidance to companies and individuals and providing personal contacts to supplement e-services.

Disa thinks that the e-services offered to SMEs are highly efficient, although some licensing authorities, such as the Environement and Health Committee at the Environment Department, City of Stockholm, need to develop their e-government services. She discusses the e-legitimation of individual approvals and follow-ups as a possible new e-service, and suggests that supplementary personal contacts after the first e-government contact would constitute best practice.

To the best of her knowledge, e-government services needed in processing cross-border activities are already offered by the well-functioning website www.sweden.se. Accordingly, she has no suggestions as to the need for e-government services to support cross-border activities and has heard of only good experiences on the part of companies contacting SBR for support in recruiting foreigners. She understands that the authorities are service minded towards SMEs and that companies rate the e-government process as excellent, as they consider IT experience. According to her, this means that companies generally have considerable experience recruiting by means of e-services. She cannot think of any e-government services connected to recruitment that need development. Disa instead highlights a contextual hindrance rather than an e-government-related issue: Job opportunities for often highly qualified family members and the rich choice of international schools in Sweden for recruits’ children must be more emphasized when endeavouring to attract highly-qualified foreign human resources.

Regarding business service platforms and digital greenhouses, she refers to existing physical and digital SMEs’ meeting points: the Stockholm Business Alliance (SBA) is a partnership between 49 (as of 2010) municipalities in the Stockholm region. Disa cites the SBA digital community as a good example, emphasizing that SBA experience indicates that such communities must be supported by a local sectoral actor to fulfil its function.

Patric, Web Editor, Development Officer for Information Web, Communication Activities, at the Swedish Migration Board, also thinks he has a good chance of influencing the development of e-government services. He says that the e-government services offered by deal with information, document requisition, registration, and applications, and that registration, which is obligatory in Sweden, can be done electronically. By assessing the
possible and real use of e-government services by SMEs, Patric has learned that focused information and explanations facilitate use. As to the main factors influencing the actual use and advantages/disadvantages of e-government services, assistance from individuals familiar with e-government websites and procedures in Sweden exerts an influence, and the applicants’ associates influence their propensity to use such services. According to Patric, if SMEs are well versed in using the Internet in general, they will be highly motivated to use e-government services. As to the improvement of existing services, Patric notes that the Board’s new website is half a year old and that the Board has striven to keep it very simple. When designing the website for its main target groups, the Board avoided providing too much information, expressing matters simply but correctly. The Board also endeavoured to establish better routines for updating information on the website. Furthermore, Patric observes that the greatest efficiency improvements have come from distinguishing between employers and employees, as each target group needs a different type of information. Efficiency is also being improved by avoiding redundant information and targeting information to the user’s specific case. Patric cites the need to reduce waiting times for migration applicants from outside the EU and EEC, although the available e-services are already faster than in-person service via embassies. To become a modern authority, he says, the Board requires a new IT system. The existence of a “virtual Migration Board” as provided for in the Service Directive would allow the applicant to do as much as possible via the Internet, though Patric says there are limits to this with respect to confidentiality and user identity. An interactive and intelligent computer network must ensure that the right person is on the other side; Patric says that this can often be difficult, since many people in contact with the Board are not from or in Sweden. If an employer is handling the application on behalf of its employee, the question is what information can be disclosed to third parties (i.e., the employer), as the Board has strict requirements concerning applicant confidentiality. Patric states that another issue that affects people’s privacy is how much information can safely be entered online, i.e., immigration officers should not have unnecessary information about an individual. Though the Migration Board has not been co-operating with www.sweden.se, the site is very much designed to be a “one-stop shop”, according to Patric, but he is dubious about the concept because the Board’s largest field of work is refugee migration. He is unfamiliar with the difficulties faced by individual migrants, for example, in opening bank accounts before the residence permit is granted, though he believes that health care is not a problem for European citizens in Sweden. He thinks it is important that migrants register as required by law, so that they will receive the social security benefits to which they are entitled. One of Patric’s suggestions is to design a website similar to the Danish www.nyidanmark.dk, perhaps called www.nyisverige.se. A pilot project is underway, and Patric says that the County Board of Växjö has been mandated to develop a website for new arrivals in Sweden (www.nyigavleborg.se). Concerning the possibility of a discussion forum, Patric responds: “I’ve seen a discussion forum for Thais. There were inaccuracies in the information from the people providing the newcomers with advice”.

Patric notes that the rules change from year to year, but that immigrant associations, support groups, or individuals in the community refer to the rules in force when they arrived in Sweden. He is pondering considering establishing a national website with information for new foreign workers in Sweden, covering issues such as education and childcare and preferably under the jurisdiction of the Public Employment Service or Tax Agency. He stresses that only general information could be provided, as waiting periods may differ between municipalities. Patric believes this problem could be solved by including a
statement such as the following: “Contact your municipality regarding matters such as how long it takes to enrol in nursery school”. As to simplifying matters even more for employers, Patric replies: “Provide e-services for all kind of cases, and provide e-ID for all applications in which a signature is required by law”.

Patric would like to create an advanced web service for both job offers and labour certification, but is still examining whether there might be legal obstacles because third parties would be involved in the advanced service design. He wants the applicant, employer, and officer to be able to go to “My page” to check for messages and concerning the progress of their specific case. In this way, it would be possible to determine quickly whether an application is complete, and time would not be wasted. Another advantage of handling applications entirely electronically would be that cases could be transferred electronically within the Migration Board anywhere in Sweden where capacity is available. Patric understands that applicants prefer personal contacts by phone or in person, and that they would like more guidance when it comes to bringing in relatives, for example. Applicants prefer information delivered verbally, rather than having to read information, he says, and they would like to “chat” with client services to lean about the rules and regulations. At present, the Migration Board delivers client service via e-mail and phone, but does not offer the option of chatting. Patric explains that the background to this is the experience of the Swedish Social Insurance Agency that client service representatives often deal with clients who want to go from client service directly to the administration of a specific case. In particular, he notes, Swedes living abroad were using the chat function to get help with the handling of their cases. Patric describes a new visa application service planned for Sweden: EU country databases will be linked to monitor people’s changes of residence. If an applicant has experienced problems in one country, an administrator/officer in another EU country can see this before a new visa is granted, Patric explains. Earlier personnel records can thus be considered when making a hiring decision. “It is difficult to co-operate across borders; today there is not even proper co-operation with the other Nordic countries, since their rules are so different from Sweden’s”. Patric mentions the European migration website, EURES (http://ec.europa.eu/eures/home.jsp?lang=en), which, along with the websites of neighbouring Nordic countries, can serve as inspiration for the Swedish website design.

Andrew, Chief Project Manager for E-migration at the Swedish Migration Board, explains that he has a very good chance of influencing the development of e-government services. He thinks that no virtual portal is needed, but that a service should be provided in which clients decide what contacts they need and build their own networks. It would be concrete and constructive to offer a service in which people can visit the Board’s website and create their own pages – “my page” – tailored to their individual cases. “My page” could be expanded to any length, and there would be no problem handling information securely. Asylum seekers, however, do not currently have e-ID; Andrew says that this creates a Catch-22, in that those who are outside the system cannot identify themselves online:

One idea is to load the e-ID on the card together with the right of residence. The vision is to use the same certificate as the police in Sweden use. Police practices, although this may sound strange to many people, can serve as the guiding vision.

Andrew explains that the E-delegation working group is carrying out a feasibility study of a shared website. The Migration Board is just one of many clients of the working group, meaning that the Board favours the idea of establishing a common website. The Swedish
Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR/SKL) is among the originators of the working group.

“E-services improve service levels, improve availability, deliver more for the tax money, and reduce processing times”, Andrew says, adding that e-services require electronic processing and e-archives. A prerequisite for e-archives is that it should be possible to obtain everything digitally, which means that anything that is not already scanned must be scanned.

“My idea regarding e-service improvement is that everything should operate in a lean production manner”. Andrew considers lean production to comprise smart management followed by lean processing. Asylum cases, he stresses, are now processed in an average of six months, down from a previous average of nine months. By thinking in lean processing terms, Andrew discovered that it would be more efficient to start all needed actions simultaneously at the beginning of the application procedure, as this could eliminate wasted time. By introducing lean processing, processing time could come down to three months. Andrew cites an example of good processing: An officer handling an asylum case books both the interpreter and the case officer in connection with the first contact with the Migration Board; moreover, the officer ensures that the decision-maker participates from the start of the application process. As to visas, visitors from the USA, Canada, Japan, and New Zealand do not require them, but for visitors from countries whose citizens require visas, he claims that e-services would be of interest. Andrew explains that the new visa law requires that ten fingerprints be submitted to the EU Embassy in one’s home country when applying for a visa. If one needs to renew the visa, e-services still apply, in that the application is made via the European embassy of one’s choice. Wherever the applicant turns, Andrew continues, the applicant’s fingerprints are stored in an EU and not a national database. He considers this very convenient, as much visa application work is being done outside Sweden. E-services can be used to apply for residence permits for work. He explains that an applicant can apply online and book his or her appointment at the embassy as soon as the process has reached the point at which the person needs to legally establish his or her identity.

Andrew says that family reunification is the most complex matter handled via e-services, which can facilitate both the applicant and the Migration Board. The examination of relationships is often complicated; an EU directive on the matter is being implemented, and supporting Swedish legislation is required, he says, as it is proposed that biometrics should form the basis for individual applications to the Board. Andrew favours using biometrics and stresses that old-fashioned biometrics, such as offenders’ fingerprints stored by the SKL, are disappearing. Upcoming legislation makes biometrics the primary basis for identification. This is incredibly important, he argues, as biometrics ensures that identification documents are authentic. Counterfeit driver’s licenses are currently the “weakest link” in the Swedish national identity context; they are still easy to obtain, he stresses, and the National Transport Board cannot address this due to existing regulations.

He states that a prerequisite for realizing the idéa of creating digital greenhouses linked to Swedish authorities’ websites is that the websites be in English; the law should be updated and currently accurate information displayed on websites. Furthermore, to be customer oriented, he suggests that all government e-services in Sweden should be provided in foreign languages, at least in English. The point of community is to communicate, but problems arise if one cannot communicate due to language barriers, and he cites the example of foreign students, who cannot be expected to understand Swedish.
The Migration Board conducts client surveys each year, which means there is a client satisfaction index. However, Andrew claims that “the index cannot really say how well the client is satisfied with the Board’s website”. He adds that the measurements made using interactive surveys on the website complement the information the client service centre obtains when talking to people about client satisfaction.

Andrew considers that Sweden has a competitive advantage over other countries when it comes to e-services, as actions prescribed by the Service Directive were implemented quickly. Running e-mail systems throughout the EU, he observes, is a big challenge that is easily underestimated. Nevertheless, such systems must be installed, as member states must exchange information:

This in turn leads to new members’ communicating everything with each other and providing services for everything, whether or not the services fulfil tasks.

As the authorities in Sweden are not centralized, i.e., not co-ordinated by a single top organization, Andrew considers “one-stop shop” portals inappropriate. Having a single portal does not address the fact that authorities in Sweden are all independent entities. According to him, the E-delegation is aiming at virtual portals, designed individually by each authority according to its need.

“The Service Directive provides for 24-hour authorities”, which, Andrew continues, is creating a new world of opportunities as authorities design their 24-hour services. Moreover, he stresses that Swedish research indicates that clients want to be offered close links between the private and public sectors.

And we still need to build other contact areas than just our own portal. For example, students abroad, planning to come to Sweden for an exchange term, won’t go directly to the Migration Board website. Instead, they find us by chance on Google. Luckily we are visible there, without even actively working on it. Now we must rethink matters and actively work on getting exposure on websites relevant to our clients.

Summary: interviews with authority representatives

Briefly stated, the interviews with representatives of Swedish government agencies indicate that the agencies seek functional quality to motivate the customers to use the technically innovative solutions offered. This is also the main reason they participated in SYSSLA.

1.7 4) Gap analysis

The study demonstrates that Swedish government agencies are highly customer-oriented. They have a clear opinion of the user and the user’s context. They also conduct customer surveys and interviews on an ongoing basis. It points to an awareness that services have a life cycle, and that life-cycle flexibility is important. The agencies understand that personal contact is important, but with regard to the outcome of the interviews with the SMEs, the study also indicates that they have not properly grasped why personal contact is important to SMEs.
5) Conclusions, recommendations, and new ideas for improving interactions between the public sector and business

In a Swedish context, it appears that e-government is being developed using a customized component approach rather than a hierarchical system structure. For example, “aps” are being adjusted to various customers’ needs, which means that the objective of e-government system change in Sweden is the customizing of components. To facilitate this approach, staff must be trained as to customer needs before customized components can be developed. Such staff training must include both management and operational personnel.

Within the framework of the Egoprise project, the recommendation is – analogous to the Swedish experience – that such staff training be initially conducted when changes in e-government services are required. In a Swedish context, this kind of staff training is often related to “design thinking”, an issue discussed in design management. One suggestion is that agencies familiarize themselves with methods such as “design thinking” and apply them in their efforts.

New ideas about improving interactions between the public sector and businesses:

Staff training in relation to changed public administration processes: Three examples that relate to “design thinking” in Egoprise.

1.8 Example 1: A service design method for public authorities

Service design aims to improve service delivery. The focus is on the end customer, creating better everyday lives for individuals through the development of popular and profitable services. An underlying pre-understanding is that customer satisfaction is correlated with profitability in both the private and public sectors.

A service designer is driven by curiosity and a desire to understand customer needs and motivations. While traditional customer surveys may end with the customers identifying their demands “inside the box”, service design tries to understand needs “outside the box”, i.e., desires that customers cannot concretize for various reasons. In this context, “inside the box” refers to solutions resembling ones that customers are used to, while “outside the box” refers to novel solutions.

By understanding “outside the box” needs, customer value can be created. Thus, service design is a customer-insight-driven service approach based on the end customer, but can also be described as a method of customer interface in the business model.

A unique aspect of service design is that the method combines deep understanding of customer needs and innovation – these two components are not separated. When conducting traditional customer surveys, however, that these two components are indeed separated. In contrast, service design is a process that is reiterated as needed, achieving joint development with the end customer.

The method in brief:
First Step: A service is understood as consisting of a system of rendezvous points laid out along a time axis. To understand these intersections, the rendezvous points are mapped. This visualization process is called “customer journey mapping”.

Second Step: When the research (which aims to understand the customer) has been conducted, the most vital insights are brought into the service design team’s idea-generating process. In this process, concepts are developed and visualized using prototypes.

Third Step: The prototypes are then used as stimulus material when the team is again interacting with the customer. The prototypes encourage an end user to refine the service concept proposed by the service design team.

With this method, the service design team is co-developing the service together with the clients’ (i.e., the authorities’) end customers. As customer satisfaction is maximized by customer involvement in the process, profitability is generated for the client.

I.9 Example 2: Developing public authorities’ services with students as a resource (read more about this example in “Staff training example, SYSSLA”)

This section suggests an approach for using unexplored resources present in academic circles. Students are young and fresh thinkers: they have up-to-date knowledge, for example, of public management, and are eager to apply it. Furthermore, practical experience will increase the value of their knowledge.

An academic researcher has an outside perspective on, for instance, the activities of businesses and authorities. Consequently, researchers, unlike consultants, regard the outer world from a distance. This is because academic knowledge is generated via an iterative process alternating between theoretical and practical knowledge. In contrast, consultants develop their learning only while working practically. Learning solely from practice makes it more difficult to develop novel solutions, leading to a risk of “single-loop learning” (de Bono, 2005). In single-loop learning, changes are only superficial, while the underlying problems remain. A researcher’s outside perspective can make it easier to gain a profound grasp of problems, i.e., when developing efforts aim to change underlying structures via what is known as double-loop learning.

The approach presented here is based on the premise that service-oriented authorities engage students to identify problems in their organizations. The most important of these problems are those that make it impossible to achieve a service level that satisfies the end user. Though students of course lack experience, they do have access to their teachers, i.e., researchers in the academic world, as coaches and mentors. The benefits of this method are several: the authority obtains enthusiastic and eager assistance at low or no cost, the students gain practical experience (which is important for their future careers), and society benefits from the use of unapplied academic knowledge.
I.10 Example 3: Public authorities deliver better services by “scrum”

The process presented below – the “scrum” method – aims to adjust internal preconditions for improved customer service.

This is a dynamic and creative approach – iterative, incremental, and agile. Its advantage is that, when involving employees, it fosters a mindset focused on better end user service, i.e., how individual employees interpret their role as service providers.

In short, the scrum method is intended for project management, for example, in the software industry. The fact that it is process oriented is crucial. Scrum consists of small project teams of 5–9 people who divide their work into smaller tasks. Within a given period, they are to discharge a limited number of tasks. Whereas traditional approaches focus on adhering to an actual plan, scrum instead focuses on continually delivering business value. It is characterized by continuous learning, and the team seeks to eliminate waste, deliver rapidly, avert delayed decisions, take local responsibility, and build team quality. It takes a holistic view rather than homing in on details. Scrum is a rugby term describing the dense shoulder-to-shoulder formation a team uses to jointly move the ball forward. The scrum method particularly aims at what needs to be developed, rather than on how to implement the project.

Scrum is applied when there is a mismatch between the current service situation and the expectations, target, and purpose of the service directive. Before scrum is initiated and to understand the reasons for the mismatch, existing problems must be identified. This goes for both the organization and the end user. Furthermore, the analysis should address what problems in the organization (i.e., the authority) are linked to what end user problems. The existing situation is thus mapped by means of:

– an analysis of the organization (problem O1, problem O2)
– an analysis of the expectations, target, and purpose of the service directive (objective T1, objective T2)

The results of the analysis are described in a general term as: P1-O2-T2. When the problem analysis and gap analysis have been completed, the staff can start the scrum process, which should last until no mismatch remains. As the staff are implementing scrum, their involvement is heightened. By doing so, the staff’s end-user-service mindset is being improved and optimized.

I.11 6. Closing comments

The primary focus of the Swedish authorities is to increase customer value. According to our conclusions, this is being done with emphasis on communicative cooperation with direct contact with customers rather than with emphasis on the technical collaboration.

As an overall summary regarding the Egoprise project, the different results in the Baltic region indicate that customer need or customer benefit is at three different levels: at the lowest level, where you do not have as extensive experience of IT structures, there is a technical perspective on customer need with an approach from the department and out. At the second level, where you have some IT experience, the customer is being interviewed
"inside the box", ie in a way denoted by single-loop learning as in de Bono (2005). It involves the client in the development, but the approach is still inside out. At the third level, one has completely left the technical perspective. Instead, technology is being adapted to the customer benefits. This is being done "outside the box", ie in a double-loop learning process as de Bono (2005), and according to the customer needs, which are being identified. The latter approach is characterized by an outside-in perspective, that is, a design thinking perspective (Brown, 2008). In conclusion, it may well be that in the future, either a subdivision in different regions will be needed, or a greater focus on integration processes between the different regions and the different cultures (http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/services/services-dir/proposal_en.htm#final).
Interviews: enterprises
• Katarina Lundberg in charge of staff, Vildmarksstugor (Norrskensbär) Berry Pickers from Thailand mainly
• Christer Wallberg, CEO, Tacton, IT Consultants
• David Ericsson CEO, North Kingdom Digital Creative Agency Digital Creatives
• Liselotte Svenroth Personnel Manager, Epsilon Utvecklingscentrum Väst, Consultancy in technology and systems development Expertise in technology and systems development
• Marianne Lyktberg, personnel and finance manager Alverbacks Blommor AB, Gardeners
• Katrin Grusmark, Personnel Manager ICEHOTEL, Hotel made of ice and snow, Artists for Hotel Experience
• Leif Salesi, Fastighetsmarknadens Investment AB, CEO and owner, construction company
  Construction Workers
• Grundnäs AB, Ivan Harnesk personnel and finance manager, cutting of reindeer and moose
  Butchers/Cutters
• Maria Nilsson, Manager, Lövånger, SME Bakery, Odd Jobbers, Utility Men (not included in this article)

Interviews: authority representatives – name of the organizations – respondents position
• The Swedish Tax Agency – Process Coordinator, Population Registration
• The Swedish Migration Board – Web Editor, Development Officer for Information Web, Communication activities
• The Swedish Migration Board – Chief Project Manager e-migration
• Stockholm Business Region Development – Project manager Business Services
• Stockholm Business Alliance – Chief Project Manager (not included in this article)
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