FUTURE OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

A Civil Service College Publication
The Wicked Problem

In recent years, we have seen disruptions in technology and business models, an increasingly vocal citizenry with higher expectations of public service delivery, the rise of the gig economy which has created more diverse, flexible ways of working, and a high-tension geo-political climate which seems to trend towards anti-globalisation (think Brexit).

Wicked Problems are often characterised by their incomplete, contradictory and changing requirements that are often difficult to resolve.

These trends result in the creation of wicked problems, which are challenges that seem unmanageable and difficult to resolve. Wicked problems are often characterised by their incomplete, contradictory and changing requirements that are often difficult to recognise.

Not only do conventional processes fail to tackle wicked problems, they may exacerbate situations by generating unintended consequences. An example of this in Singapore’s context would be our rapidly ageing population, which may have potential impact on our population growth, workforce productivity, and healthcare infrastructure.

These problems cannot be resolved just by bringing in new immigrants, foreign talent or building new hospitals as it might give rise to other issues such as over-dependency on foreign labour and land scarcity.

The multidimensional nature of many of these emergent economic, social and environmental problems the public sector is called upon to address demands a systemic perspective. Simultaneously, the volatile and unpredictable nature of policy challenges and their environments requires anticipative responses.

This demands governments that are nimble and agile, able and ready to learn as they go, and can adjust paths and approaches based on this learning. This also demands that agencies come together more frequently in teams and offer different skill sets to resolve such problems.

Over the past few years, Singapore’s public administration and management model has undergone significant changes, where previous transformation efforts resulted in better service delivery, a more engaged citizenry and greater trust in the Public Service.

However, in light of the above mentioned trends and driving forces such as digital disruption, ageing population and vocal citizenry, there is an urgent need to re-evaluate the pace and depth of transformation.
The Wicked Problem

The next phase of Public Sector Transformation therefore, looks into transformation in a few areas: digital government (digital to the core), ways of work across agencies and ways of working with citizens, with the vision of building a better Public Service that is capable of building a better future for Singapore.

How will the roles of government and citizens continue to evolve? What does the future of public administration and management look like? This paper serves to provide some insights as to how the roles of the government, citizens and the ways in which the public service works will evolve.
Accompanied by limited resources: Governmental resources will continue to be constrained as we aim to meet a higher quantity and quality of requests.

Disruptions caused by technology: Emerging technologies have resulted in disruptions to business models and operations. Singapore’s public service will need to adapt to these disruptions, or risk becoming disrupted and lose its relevance to citizens.

Leading the change is a younger and more educated generation with rising aspirations and expectations, facing leaders who now deal with more complex issues, often amid fewer resources.

While each trend is disruptive on its own, the aggregation of these forces demands the public service to transform in an agile manner, or risk being disrupted itself. Even with increased collaboration between ministries and statutory boards, it is still unrealistic to expect the government to continue to be the sole provider of all services. The government may not have requisite expertise on upcoming trends, nor the competitive advantage to roll out services in a timely and cost-effective manner.

Today: The Provider

Currently the public service is viewed as a provider of services, through steering and catalysing various market-driven outcomes. By organising ourselves as “One Public Service with Citizens in the Centre”, coordination problems were reduced by aggregating different units of the public service together in a whole-of-government approach.

With strengthened central oversight and increased collaboration within discrete government units, public offerings and services were able to be even more efficient and service-driven, upholding the high standards of public service excellence and responsiveness.

Nevertheless, the velocity and extent of change demands the Service to continuously improve, manifested in multiple drivers:

- Broadening measures of success: The definition of value, progress and performance of the government continues to expand to include non-financial measures of development, encompassing indicators from innovation to happiness.
- Increasingly diverse expectations of stakeholders: The range of stakeholders for public sector organisations and their breadth of concerns are increasing in the light of systemic failures and economic turbulence, driven by a younger and more educated generation with rising aspirations and expectations.

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Tomorrow: The Broker

The public service has been gradually evolving into the role of a broker. In future, we are likely to see more collaboration with agencies (both profit and non-profit) to achieve policy outcomes. Moving forward, the government would increasingly convene cross-agency, multidisciplinary teams to deliver solutions to specific user problems. The government will also emerge, negotiate and broker citizen interests, selecting the best fit model for delivery, rather than providing different services in silos.

This brings about new opportunities for public value co-creation as the government forges new partnerships and sources new ways of resolving wicked problems.

Working with different organisations to deliver public services allows the Service to build new capabilities much more rapidly than in the Provider model. By partnering subject matter experts in each domain area, the Service is exposed to their best practices, mental models and technical skill to drive service excellence at a much faster rate.

For example, the Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore works closely with Hope Technik, a home-grown technology company specialising in high performance engineering to roll out special drones for surveillance at sea. These drones, known as Water Spiders, can take off from land or sea, and is used to monitor maritime incidents (e.g. oil spills, search and rescue). This has allowed port authorities to obtain a more comprehensive, real time assessment on incidents and result in more efficient decision making.
Sunrise industries could also be sensitised to public considerations while allowing the government to understand the rationale behind seemingly controversial initiatives private players might push. Ride sharing company Grab is engaging closely with MAS on plans for GrabPay, to ensure that they meet all relevant regulatory requirements to create safe and secure cashless payment systems.

**Did you know?**

Singapore’s real estate developer City Developments Limited offered experience and knowledge when the Building Construction Authority in Singapore first began putting together the Green Mark Certification for buildings.

Today, building authorities take into account the sustainability of the buildings compared to when the tender was purely price-based.

In future, we can expect our ministries and agencies to contract with more third party providers to deliver services to citizens on their behalf, which could take the form of service contracts, grants to non-profit models, social impact bonds and public private partnerships.
Future Service Delivery Models

A. Public Private Partnerships (PPP)
Public private partnership initiatives are already being considered to fund large scale public infrastructure programs, like the Changi Airport Living Lab Program in partnership with Economic Development Board to accelerate innovation using the airport as a testbed, or the Singapore FinTech Association MOU with Polytechnics to nurture a skilled FinTech community.

It is therefore crucial for governments to review and change current procurement models to allow businesses to provide domain expertise without compromising the integrity of procurement processes. Additionally, government officials need to have a greater commercial focus and approach.

The most successful contracts build resilience within the government through collaboration and shared learning for both parties. In the words of Lim Hwee Hwa, executive director of Tembusu Partners and Former Second Minister for Finance and Transport, “If it is profitable for the private sector to develop and sell resilience solutions, and valuable for governments to buy and implement them, then resilience thinking and planning can take hold and be self-perpetuating. But in order for this to happen, there must be close collaboration between the public and private sector.”

B. New Business Models
In extreme situations of uncertain economic climates, the pace of introduction of new business models could accelerate, disrupting and reinventing industries, which could increase the need to develop new models of financing and alternative models of operation in our ministries and statutory boards altogether.

This raises questions on the value that the Singapore government is able to capture with these new business and operating models, which will necessarily result in new processes and governance models. The Public Service should therefore be agile enough to switch to new processes and be equipped with relevant knowledge to conduct appropriate risk management to be able to assess a contract’s value for money.

The most successful contracts build resilience within the government through collaboration and shared learning for both parties.
Rethinking procurement and regulation

Procurement Strategies

Aligning to this, public procurement would have to take on a more strategic role within the public service, providing clear and effective guidance on implementation of a public procurement system that employs state-of-the-art tools and techniques to employ public funds sustainably and efficiently.

Public procurement will also need to drive mind-set and behavioural change as new ways of work and collaboration could result in traditional procurement processes and regulations becoming obsolete.

Current procurement regulations may be seen to run against the grain of innovation within the public service by reflecting the lack of trust in local small medium enterprises, who face multiple challenges in competing for government projects, such as substantiating their product claims, lacking of track record and gaining market visibility.

Being agile and innovative requires trust. Procurement contracts should prioritise the success of the collaboration, rather than ostensibly protecting the client. The shift in mindset is profound but arguably required. Government agencies should no longer be looking to buy a ‘thing’, but see procurement contracts as entering a relationship to jointly design and build and product or a service.

Anticipatory Regulation

Traditional regulatory theory is reactive to trends - legislating certain regulations to correct and police the actions of citizens. While it works arguably well for stable industries and technologies, it struggles to handle more dynamic fields, especially those that blur the lines between different industries, such as the likes of platform-based business models like Grab and Uber that have disrupted many companies.

While in the past, regulators could ignore new developments until they reached a certain scale, but the speed at which new firms are developing have skyrocketed - demanding the attention of regulators almost overnight through displacing large numbers of jobs, threatening newer incumbents, or compromising the safety and privacy of many.

The rising popularity in drone usage has prompted the Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore to pass the Unmanned Aircraft (Public Safety and Security) Bill, which aims to regulate the usage of drones with a clear set of rules - adding on to the red tape required to obtain permission for the commercial and specialised usage of drones such as photography or surveying.
However, timing plays a critical role in regulation - regulating too early could freeze off innovative business models and restrict potential to increase public welfare; acting too late could expose individuals to harm and entrench new monopolies.

There have been discussions on whether the stringent laws will impede the progress of the industry - or even a stumbling block in Singapore's bid to become a drone hub. However, the direct impact of such unmanned aircrafts to the lives of Singaporeans will not be obvious, and current regulations will continue to be irrelevant as innovation continues to make such devices lighter and all encompassing.

To achieve a better alignment of technology developments and public regulation, it is important to deploy tools in a think big, start small approach to allow more agile responses. Besides open dialogue with the innovators and related stakeholders, it is also important to talk to possible incumbents in the market.

The Singapore Finance sector is a good example - with open dialogue between regulators and new entrants involved in Bitcoin and Blockchain technologies in order to better assess the risks and benefits involved.

Regulation sandboxes and testbeds could also help regulators be more agile. Such sandboxes pair regulators up with innovators as they are testing their ideas, to help them think through the regulatory implications, ranging from purely advisory to an anticipation of possible products and services. The UK’s Financial Conduct Authority use regulatory sandboxes to allow new entrants to test out their products and potential regulatory implications in a close dialogue with policymakers.

In line to this, regulators also need new skills - besides understanding new technologies and business models, they also need to be able to communicate and facilitate discussions with multiple stakeholders and engage large communities.

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Table 1: Types of Anticipatory Regulation Techniques
Beyond brokering with the plethora of public and private organisations to push forth newer solutions, it won’t be too far into the future to see the government chaperone more self-organised communities or crowdsourced activities that drive solutions to tackle the nation’s challenges in a ‘By Citizen, For Citizen’ approach.

Amsterdam has already experienced this reality 3 years ago, when Waag Society ran the Smart Citizen project in Amsterdam in conjunction with the Amsterdam Smart City and Fablab Barcelona to crowdsource environmental monitoring, where citizens could measure their air quality in their own environment in real time using open source tools and IoT technologies in a cost-efficient manner.

The results were astounding. While it only aimed to recruit 100 volunteers, over double the amount responded with their interest to help monitor harmful gas emissions in their environment, citing their concerns about the air quality. Since then, this small pilot has scaled up to a larger environmental monitoring project, generating other spin-off projects that aim to improve the city’s air quality.

The Singapore government has also launched the first whole-of-government crowdsourcing portal, eCitizen Ideas!, to partner citizens as individual contributors to tackle the nations challenge in a cost-efficient manner. The portal allows each government agency to independently organise and manage crowdsourcing activities such as application development competitions, hackathons and campaigns, empowering citizens to drive the proves of developments that shape their lives. Four government agencies have already put out a Request for Information to crowdsource the answer to an affordable e-payment solution at hawker centres, coffee shops and heartland shops for merchants, customers and suppliers.
North Rotterdam couldn’t wait for their public bridge project any longer, forcing citizens to find a more direct solution. By late 2000s, northern portion of city of Rotterdam was separated from central hub of the city by busy highways and rail lines that made crossing over in the section of the city inconvenient at best, and at some points nearly impossible. Due to the urban barrier, the northern part of the town has fallen on hard times economically and was generally neglected by both citizens and city.

Locals devised a plan to build a foot bridge that would allow people to travel over the roadway. Instead of waiting for the city to get the project running, a pioneering architecture firm set up a crowdfunding system where donors could buy planks for the bridge, the name of the donor being engraved on a piece of wood. The campaign was a success, ending up winning a design competition that provided millions in further funding.

Not only has it achieved its purpose by driving more development into the formerly dormant northern section of the city through more foot traffic and renewed interest in the area, it also stands as a radical symbol of the possibilities inherent in a city built by the people who live in it.

The Lutchesingel - Bridging Possibilities

Not only has it achieved its purpose by driving more development into the formerly dormant northern section of the city through more foot traffic and renewed interest in the area, it also stands as a radical symbol of the possibilities inherent in a city built by the people who live in it.
To encourage citizens to try out new and creative ideas, URA has started a programme "Our Favourite Place", which supports citizens to activate public spaces through ground-up initiatives, such as closing certain streets from vehicular traffic on weekends. URA is also prepared to provide seed funding for good ideas and help citizens get regulatory approval from different government agencies to translate their ideas into action.

While governments have turned to crowdsourcing as a solution for service delivery, care has to be taken to distinguish the motivations behind doing so. Rather than perceiving crowdsourcing efforts to be the “the last resort” in times of government inefficiency in the likes of North Rotterdam, the thrust behind the transition for the Singapore public administration lies in the need to remain a leading Public Service that stays ahead of change, turning challenges into opportunities and continually reinventing ourselves.

The improvements made in service delivery and citizen engagement in the past few years are just the tip of the iceberg - there so much more potential to be unlocked should the collective wisdom of citizens be tapped on. Engaging citizens in the decision-making processes or brainstorming sessions not only generates more efficient and effective solutions, but could result in cost savings and risk management in the process.

"Crowdsourcing is really about how can we harness the passion and talent of our citizens to solve our problems. This might sound really simple, but typically a government will spend hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of dollars building these things."

- Peter Corbett, CEO of iStrategyLabs, Lead Company of Washington D.C.'s 'Apps for Democracy' Project.

As citizens are involved in the processes, they are in turn, empowered to make the most appropriate choices for themselves in the right context and moments. Communities, through co-creation, may be able to create a new consensus based on local knowledge.
Preparing for the Future

Traditionally, the public administration of Singapore has been highly interventionist in its approach. Shifts toward the future may require each agency to take on a different spectrum of roles in terms of provider, broker and chaperone, given that the context and emphasis of issues will vary across different agencies. Cultural change within the government will also be required as we look beyond the service to partner with organisations and individual contributors to develop future solutions.

The public goods and resources of the future would expand beyond rivalrous, finite resources like land and national defence to also include data, knowledge and connections based on the relationships forged. The nature of these resources are strikingly different, growing rather than depleting from being used. For example, raw data, when interpreted and analysed in multiple ways, can generate even more studies, models, data and solutions. Therefore, these resources reside in the collective wisdom rather than with any individual. It is critical to share this new paradigm shift with officers and citizens alike, in order to leverage the opportunities of the future.

The service needs to navigate between domains that can be crowd sourced as compared to the traditional public goods and services that inherently need to be managed. This strategic balancing act is likely to see different agencies along the entire plane from provider-broker-chaperone. Public officers, especially those in the front lines, will increasingly need to be empowered and accountable to facilitate meaningful conversations and seek out citizen needs.

Food for Thought

- How might we improve the lives of our citizens?
- What are some functions we are comfortable letting go?
- How can we ensure that we are still delivering quality services that fulfil the needs of citizens?
- Are we ready for greater empowerment and accountability of our line?
Bibliography


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II: Role of Citizen

Today: The Consumer

Today’s public administration regards citizens as their valuable customers, continuously improving and streamlining business processes to ensure the needs of different citizen segments are met seamlessly. As a result of that, the Service has shifted from an agency-centric approach to a user-centric one, leveraging data and technology to understand the citizen-customer needs better.

While this transformation changed the way government services were delivered, it remains insufficient for the future. In light of recent economic turbulence and systemic failures, the range of stakeholders for public sector organisations and the breadth of their concerns is drastically increasing. These concerns reflect a similarly increasing lack of confidence in the public sector. In fact, a 2013 Gallup poll shows that confidence in public institutions has declined from the year 2007 to 2012 - in part due to economic woes (in Europe), unpopular wars (carried out in the Middle East), and nuclear disaster fallouts (in Japan). Singaporeans are also getting increasingly participative and less deferential - they have higher expectations of what public services should offer.

This brings newer tensions and possibilities as we see healthier levels of civil participation, often through higher levels of new media usage which proliferates the number of conversations citizens may hold with other citizens. Individuals are able to gather in virtual communities and share information, opinions and perspectives on government policies and programs, consequently helping other individuals to form their opinions as well.

In a two-way informational flow, the government is also able to gather feedback from citizens to enable them to influence the program originally designed for their benefit.

For example, in regulating the usage of personal mobility devices and power-assisted bicycles, the Active Mobility Bill was drafted based on guidelines put forward by an Active Mobility Advisory Panel comprising key stakeholder groups like seniors, youths, cyclists and personal mobility device users - set up after a nationwide public consultation and fully accepted by the government. While Mrs Josephine Teo, Senior Minister of State for Transport qualifies that LTA continues to “keep an open mind and continue to review the rules”, the preliminary guidelines were able to be more all-encompassing post-consultation.

Nevertheless, the way citizens currently interact with the Government remain highly passive. Citizens at large still expect the government to be responsible for providing all the answers to the multifaceted demands of regulation, societal welfare and service delivery. As the government’s roles of ‘The Broker’ and ‘The Chaperone’ become more important in the future, the role of citizens demands a similar paradigm shift: citizens can expect to play a more active role in the discovery of solutions for future demands.
Engaging the citizen as a co-creator could be the answer to satisfying more demands with the same resource constraints. The scale and value of the resources that citizens can contribute is enormous - families and communities are able to generate a large amount of economic value that is unmeasured and unrecognised by public services.

As quoted by Professor Chan Heng Chee, Ambassador-at-large, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, citizens will "expect to play a greater role in governance", and should be given opportunities to participate in decision making. Future public offerings could very likely be co-produced or co-created, as citizens are empowered to contribute their resources (time, willpower, expertise effort), and have greater control over service decisions and resources. Beyond new products, solutions in services, processes, regulations and policy could be reimagined with the help of community members.

The effects are unsurmountable when coupled with technology. In 2013, New York’s ‘Reinvent NYC.gov’ gathered developers and designers in a hackathon to transform the official government website - with over one million pages serving over 35 million visitors annually. In the hackathon, over 100 participants were supported by access to leading technology APIs and city data to collaboratively built prototypes in a span of 36 hours.

Co-production often improves citizen engagement by leaps and bounds when they have a meaningful role to play in the decision making and implementation of the project.

The new site design is user-centric and can be easily navigated to find important alerts, make a service request, retrieve customised information and even apply for a job in the city. This hackathon established an effective template for sparking innovation, accelerating development and encouraging greater civic collaboration within New York.

Co-production often improves citizen engagement by leaps and bounds when they have a meaningful role to play in the decision making and implementation of the project. Seoul initiated a comprehensive Community Planning Exercise that directly involved citizens to uncover local needs (which complemented government big data) in the urban planning process. This engagement process increased community consensus and reduced downstream implementation processes due to resistance from the community. A post survey also showed significant increase in the proportion of residents (43.9%) attempting to actively solve issues within the community.
By allowing citizens to feel like part of the process, they would gain more trust in the government and be better informed about policies, consequently less likely to develop misconceptions and be swayed by sensational media. However, empowering communities cannot simply occur by entrusting them to make crucial decisions - a process of building capabilities within the communities are required to ensure that these communities are capable of making informed choices in a sustainable way.

Deeper engagements with the citizens for co-creation also challenges established notions of public sector values, practices, accountability, knowledge and skills - built upon the basis where the government was the sole creator of public goods and services.

For this to happen, the public administration would need to change the way we fundamentally work with citizens, taking on a more active and purposeful approach in citizen engagement by equipping citizens with skills and tools to self-organise, communicate, and garner consensus, as well as sharing more information and data to help the public understand policies and programs, or even generate solutions of their own.

A few portals have set the precedence on open government data sharing. Agencies are encouraged to share non-confidential, non-restricted data on data.gov.sg., which is a centralised open data portal accessible by the public. It hosts over a thousand datasets captured by the public sector, and has been made more relevant and understandable with data visualisation and data narratives. To support the effort of developers using the data on data.gov.sg, there is also a developer resource page which includes real time APIs. Both platforms enable anyone to participate and co-create solutions that leverage social capital.

Empowering communities cannot simply occur by entrusting them to make crucial decisions - a process of building capabilities within these communities is required to ensure they are capable of making informed choices in a sustainable way.

Amongst others, this has led to the birth of smart mobility solutions like ‘Beeline’, which leverages open data and API architecture to provide convenient transportation solutions based on commuter demand, enabling effective fleet management and streamlining operations for private bus operators.
A: Having a Robust Engagement Strategy

A robust citizen engagement strategy helps to set the right conditions and backdrop for governments to achieve improved public service delivery and governance, given that outcomes of citizen engagement are highly context specific and sensitive to both the government and citizen willingness and ability to engage.

It is important for public administration to engage citizens on 3 roles:
- Having a strategic orientation (improvement of policy outcomes)
- Professional Expertise (services, outreach and communications)
- Innovation Capabilities (crowdsourcing and co-creation)

Individuals involved in services management and policy design should be able to draw meaningful insights from multiple citizen channels to improve their operational work. Ideally, employing participative approaches to involve citizens throughout the entire project lifecycle - which could be as simple as undertaking user research at different project stages (to identify needs and test prototypes) to deep participatory exercises such as coproduction of policies and services that aim to foster a sense of joint ownership between officers and users.

While many of such current channels are formalised in the likes of focus group discussions or interviews, it would be increasingly important to capture feedback from informal channels like social media, with the help of big data technologies and analytics.

Building these feedback loops across all channels could allow for integration of insights from users of services, organisations of delivery networks and contracts to enable agile and adaptive service delivery.

There is also the need to understand active citizenry at a deeper level, having clear objectives in seeking the public’s views, as well as being careful not to raise unrealistic expectations. Public officers need to balance between embracing a more active citizenry against the equality of political voice - putting in careful thought to ensure that we are engaging a representative group of citizens in a process that is perceived to be fair to all the stakeholders involved.

There is a need to understand active citizenry at a deeper level, having clear objectives in seeking the public’s view, as well as being careful not to raise unrealistic expectations.

As it is important to manage the expectations of citizens, it might also be worthwhile to consider an exit strategy that ensures that community members can continue to solve their problems once their capabilities have been developed, instead of leaving an endless feedback loop.
B: Ensuring Inclusive Progress
In the process of engaging citizens to co-create future public offerings, care needs to be put in place to curate an inclusive society - to ensure equitable progress for every citizen.

More often than not, co-creation opportunities are biased to the affluent - the needs and preferences of the most needy could be overlooked if they are uninvolved in discussions. The digital divide presents another dimension of inequality. When URA trialled the mobile parking payment application, a fair share of interviewees (~50%) perceived the process to be more cumbersome, given that they needed to have an existing data subscription - it’s not hard to imagine how digital non-natives might feel if digital natives already have such concerns.

While conscious efforts have been made to make current ICT policies inclusive for the silver generation, single parents, lower income households, more needs to be done as we progress towards a co-created government. The barriers to becoming an active contributor in community networks and a co-creator of solutions are significantly higher: individuals have to go beyond being proficient in navigating technological platforms to acquire information for learning and working, to also be able to leverage technology to develop and showcase their competencies. More has to be done to lower these barriers of co creation to ensure that no one is alienated or helpless in such a future.

C: Making sense of diverse voices
As citizens become more proactive in initiating certain interventions, there could be risks of perceived over-control by the state that needs to be mitigated. Alongside higher citizen engagement comes societal fragmentation and widening inequalities should initiatives be perceived to be captured by special interest groups and elites.

Public officers should therefore be able to strike a balance between making sense of diverse opinions while safeguarding the role of the government. They should also be cognizant of the risks that come with leaning towards either end. Current risk structures are focused on control and compliance, which results in risk aversion in the public service. As a result, officers might play it safe by operating within existing governance processes and organisation boundaries, and might be reluctant to take risks to implement measures that may be necessary but unpopular.

There is a need to increase risk awareness at senior levels, to engender conversations on risk mitigation - which will promote the acceptance of various risk levels and development of risk mitigation strategies. Public officers should be able to conduct appropriate risk assessments and evaluations to justify their decisions.
Preparing for the Future

The journey towards citizen engagement is a gradual, iterative process open to self-experimentation and continuous iteration for both citizens and the service alike. It will be critical for public officers to be able to challenge the status quo – breaking beyond the “It’s always been done this way” and “If it’s not broke don’t fix it” mentality as a defence against change.

There is need to encourage more public officers to have the chutzpah to ‘go against the tides’ to voice out opinions that sometimes could be disruptive, or even unpopular.

Chutzpah (n.)
*Pronounced ‘hutz-pah’*

Of Yiddish origin, it refers to shameless audacity or almost arrogant courage (used to approve another), often in the face of higher authority.

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**Food for Thought**

- What social groups do we wish to engage?
- How should we engage them?
- What are the kinds of topics we should engage citizens on? What are the kinds of topics we should avoid engaging citizens on?
- Do good citizens make good governments, or do good governments make good citizens?


III: Way of Work

As the roles of the government and the citizens evolve, the way the Public Service operates will transform too, in terms of structure and organisation of entire departments, work processes and manpower deployment. Individually, this also requires a fundamental shift in mind-sets of public officers - they have to be aware of how this transformation will affect them and be prepared for changes in their ways of working.

Whole of Government Agility

For the government to continuously create value for citizens (such as brokering with private organisations to optimise service delivery or co-creating with citizens), it needs to embrace agility. Being agile helps the public service respond faster to emerging trends and weak signals by providing clarity of our environment before the trends become pervasive and systemic.

In order to be agile, the organisation needs to be both dynamic and stable - dynamic practices enable the governments to respond quickly to new challenges and opportunities, while stable practices cultivate reliability and efficiency by establishing a backbone of elements that are unchanging.

According to PwC’s 2013 Future of Government, governmental agility is defined as:

- Formal and well-defined processes for continuous intelligence scanning of the environment for emergent threats and opportunities, as opposed to an ad-hoc, informal approach,
- Recognising and responding in a timely manner to new circumstances and events by redeploying resources across the organisation’s network in a goal-directed manner, or leveraging on external networks,
- Working across boundaries to pursue cross agency collaborations to achieve joint outcomes,
- Adapting capabilities to deliver on outcomes through bringing in incumbents with requisite capabilities, reskilling existing staff and exiting staff who no longer fit the organisation’s needs,

governed by a series of evergreen values of the public service.

“For Canadian leaders, agility is the ability to be responsive, flexible and creative, while being attuned to serving citizen needs.”
Increased Interagency Integration

The digital revolution disrupts public service delivery in several ways: citizens expect the public sector to have a more comprehensive view of their needs and provide them with service that make their lives easier, bypassing the need to deal with several institutions to complete a single procedure. This implies a whole of governmental effort and significant interagency coordination to ensure the building blocks for integrated service delivery (such as shared resources, common digital identity, coherent policy framework for data sharing) are in place.

Currently, the public service is organised functionally in clearly defined agencies for short term optimisation. This same structure might not be the best design to encourage thinking of doing things in a different way if the future changes occur beyond functional boundaries. It would be increasingly important to think of ways to reorganising and restructurings ourselves to streamline the delivery processes, on both physical and digital fronts to provide high-touch, personalised services.

This has led to the creation of the Municipal Services Office in 2014, to improve the Government’s overall coordination and delivery of municipal services, as well as the more recent Moments of Life initiative which aims to integrate government digital service offerings, streamlining the business process re engineering and government services across different agencies. These structures pave the future way of work for the public service, with increased cross boundary teams and program offices forming, reconstituting and disbanding in an agile manner to execute initiatives.

It is likely that the future of work could be akin to how consultancies organise their staff - by type, rather than by task; deployed to projects (tasks) for their capabilities, and held accountable through the time spent on their projects and peer feedback.

Cross-boundary teams are challenging to manage - the best teams have clear guiding priorities and decision making processes and consist of highly empathetic individuals. In the case of Moments of Life, as different agencies - each bearing their unique process and workflow were aggregated, certain existing process in agencies had to be dropped to give way for a better user experience for the citizen.

Besides placing the joint project goal before individual agency interest, individuals in such teams also have to be aware of the different lenses and mental models teammates from different agencies possess, to be fully able to harness the diversity of thought and not be locked in by a certain agency’s way of thinking.
Integrating Digital Offerings

Besides integrating physical fronts as in lifestyle complexes, it is also important to reorganising and restructuring the service on the digital front, streamlining the delivery processes to provide high-touch, personalised digital services.

There are 3 defined stages of digital offerings:

- **Digital services are offered to citizens in silos**
  This includes sending citizens discrete links or QR codes to various digital offerings through various touch points (such as emails, letters, facebook posts and advertisements).

- **One stop service portal**
  This is what most digital offerings of the service is like - citizens are able to access multiple services on one platform. Nevertheless, this is largely driven by information pull by citizens - who find information and search for digital services as they require it.

- **Optimisation stage**
  The final stage goes one step further from amalgamating services together to optimise the digital services delivery through personalisation and a journey based experience. After a citizen transacts with a particular service, the integrated portal would naturally bring them to the next transaction they might require.

Services and information are actively pushed to individuals who are perceived to need it most, based on the stages of life they are at. Individuals might also be nudged with the integration of behavioural insights to help them maximise the welfare of their decisions.
An Augmented Workforce

The hallmark of an agile workforce is the ability to be able to reallocate human capacity to emerging needs, and is dependent on effective workforce planning mechanisms and internal mobility, which remains a challenge due to traditional hiring practices that match positions to skills.

Interventions that build a deployable pool of public officers - such as job rotations across business units, opportunities for engagements in cross-agency projects or even secondments into the private sector continue to be important to train public officers to approach issues from different perspectives. Therefore, it is critical to equip all public officers with a core set of skills that would make them deployable across public service agencies and the private sector.

Today's public service workforce sees full-time: emplaced employees being complemented with temporary staff to manage peak periods. Moving forward, the public service may need to have even more flexibility to scale up and down (and acquire requisite capabilities) as needed to solve future problems.

The future public service could see a whole continuum of talent: freelancers, contractors, individuals with disabilities, or even enhanced individuals augmented with technology.

More thought needs to be put in place on how we can augment our full time workforce with alternative employment categories to deliver most value to citizens.

It is critical for the service to equip all officers with a core set of skills that would make them deployable across public agencies and the private sector.

Existing full-time public officers will also need to be engaged and empowered to reskill continuously in accordance to changing demands and new advancements. While it was previously on the onus of the organisation to drive training and development, officers now need to take ownership of their professional development - to self-source learning and lead projects that facilitate application and delivery at work.
The future of training and development could see officers self-serving their learning and developmental needs - self-sourcing for learning opportunities and leading projects that help to facilitate their application of learning and delivery at work.

TIFA, the training institute of the Belgium Federal Authority developed a self-serve training program which is not only directly applicable to the workplace, but also results in a clear impact to the institution.

They have three training offerings:

- **Self Service**: An open webpage on an e-learning platform – anyone who wishes to understand how a certain management technique is likely to be used in the federal administration can access the relevant reference materials (carefully curated by federal expert trainers for a public service context) in relation to that management technique at their own time.

- **Co Lab**: Interactive training sessions of one or two days for civil servants who already know the basics of management techniques. They include managers, collaborators of management support teams and project leaders involved with management techniques. The main aim is to learn from each other through cases, exercises, feedback and hands on tips. An entry test is required to prove the civil servants’ ability to manage the material of the self-service.

- **The Academy**: Expert coaching regarding a concrete project. Project teams can present their project related to a determined management technique.
The Leaders and Public Officers of Tomorrow

From a command and control leadership, the future public service would require a transient shift to an enable-and-collaborate future. Leaders will increasingly lead more networks and less hierarchies, acting as facilitators for the exchange of ideas and flow of conversation across the organisation, providing greater autonomy at team and individual levels.

Leaders need to be able to harness ideas, people, and resources across boundaries of all kinds. That means building strong connections inside and outside the business, knowing when to wield influence rather than authority, and when to call time on circular discussions, quash politicking, and take decisive action.

In such an environment, leaders of the future may no longer be defined in terms of their rank or job grade, but in terms of their competency and skill level.

Jeffery Joerres said in his interview on the future of work, “As we look to the future, role modelling of behaviours is going to be more important than training.” As the public sector transits into more fluid model with cross agency work, leaders will need new ways to communicate with employees and get a stock take of their organisation.

Leaders will also need to strike the balance between innovation and accountability. While innovation is typically associated with experimentation, creativity and positive change, accountability is about responsibility, and could carry connotations of liability and even guilt when failure is involved.

The conundrum needs to be able to be self-supporting: innovation should support accountability, and vice versa. While innovation needs creativity to start, it also needs structure to work: accountability provides the necessary framework in which ideas can thrive.

Google’s 2-year study on team performance has also revealed that the most creative, highest performing teams have one thing in common- psychological safety: the belief you won’t be punished when you make a mistake. Leaders have a responsibility to create that safety for their teams.
Public Service Leaders of the future will need to:

- Engender conversations on risk mitigation
- Create a culture of psychological safety for teams to voice out their ideas and opinions
- Create a shared vision to ensure the organisation understands the need for transformation
- Inspire and influence others to embrace change and assume ownership of their development

As public officers, there is a need to be bold and experiment with new policy and service approaches so that interventions can be tested and adjusted in real time as they are incrementally implemented. It could also mean building feedback loops at every stage of the process to ensure that insights from users of services, organisations that make up the delivery networks and contractors can feed into the evidence base. This kind of flexibility and adaptive management does not seem to be part of our current approach to policy making.

Ideally, future public officers should possess these six qualities (which are derived from interviews with public officers across various fields):

- They are able to approach their work in iterative ways that generate learning and adaptation over time.
- They are aware of the potential data and structure projects that can collect and use data to inform and drive change.
- They are citizen centred - able to use a broad set of tools and methods to interact with their stakeholders and direct beneficiaries to understand their reality and design services that meets their needs.
- They are curious, searching out opportunities to expand their own knowledge and understanding, looking at solutions from other sectors or policy fields and translating those to their scenarios.
- They are story tellers, ready to leverage a range of tools to communicate with various stakeholders in ways they can understand and engage with.
- Finally, they are insurgents - ready to understand how to effect change in the systems within which they work, able to know when to negotiate or compromise.
Role of Technology

While technology has already begun to transform the way processes and services are being run - in the likes of virtual assistants and chatbots, the next wave of technologies will begin to transform the way people communicate and work with one another.

Vendors are offering businesses and governments a growing range of these tools, including social media like platforms like Workplace by Facebook, as well as employee crowdsourcing tools such as AnswerHub and Spigit.

With the proliferation of technology enabled social tools, individuals are better able to communicate more freely and self-organise with like-minded individuals, which have changed the nature of work from team to function-based to a more projects-based one.

In future, platforms may match public officers with citizens in a more ad-hoc basis to conjunctively share information or push relevant material to even more stakeholders. Consider Unilever’s “Creating Brands for Life” social media marketing strategy, which aims to turn customers into advocates for the company’s brands.

Collaborative technologies could even enable arrangements that enlist citizens as trusted representatives of the government to disseminate information and gather feedback in a personable yet cost efficient manner.

Collaborative technologies could even enable arrangements that enlist citizens as trusted representatives of the government.

In implementing smart technologies, care has to be taken to ensure that it continues to be a feasible and sustainable medium and alternative. While technology is able to improve the quality of touchpoints and data collection, cost of such technologies (both economic and societal) need to be qualified to ensure that technology equalises more than it divides.

For example, telemedicine, a cloud based platform allowing multiparty video conferencing and sharing and display of medical data during consultation is a highly popular health provision model in China, due to the scarcity of manpower and clinics in provincial areas - which generates immense cost savings as entire hospitals don’t have to be built.

However, such a model might not reap equivalent value in Singapore given the proliferation of medical centres, which could render the costs of setting up such a system to be far exceeding that of China’s.
Bibliography


The message is clear: We cannot remain business as usual. The public service has to be ahead of the transformation curve, or be forced to accept the transformation when it comes upon us, which may render us obsolete to our citizens by then.

Meanwhile, the efficiency gap between companies and governments continues to grow. Based on a World Economic Forum article, the efficiency gap between companies and governments are widening. Over 1997-2012, output per job grew by 24% in private sector services, and only 9% in public services.

This points to a need for us to act more like entrepreneurs, and grow an appetite for risk. However, this has to be balanced with a reasonable amount of consideration, public accountability and safety.

In the words of DPM Teo, “Disrupt ourselves before we are disrupted.” Fortunately, we are well placed to disrupt ourselves. Through Smart Nation initiatives (e.g. Moments of Life), we are increasingly realising the importance of data and data sharing across agencies to gain more insights on how we can develop more effective policies and services. The Municipal Services Office is an exemplar of how we are breaking down the traditional silo ways of working to create connected inter agency teams to solve multi-faceted issues. There is also a public service wide push for digitalisation and innovation, driven by the Public Service Division.

With all these calls to action, will you stand up and help shape the future of public administration, or still remain part of the wasteful status quo?
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