Seoul e-Government – Towards a Smart City

ISSUES

The computer ownership rate has increased 17.6 times from 5% in 1985 to 86% in 2009. Until the mid-1960s one in every ten households had a phone, but this had increased to 0.54 phones per household in 1997, then to 1.56 in 2000, and by 2007, there were 1.34 phones per household. Much of this growth can be attributed to the proliferation of mobile phones since the 1990s, when 0.2 persons of every 100 had one in 1990, and 105.5 of every 100 by 2011. In 2000, 8.2 of every 100 people had a broadband internet connection, but this had dramatically increased to 35.9 of every 100 by 2011, or by a multiple of 4.4.

As a means to achieve governmental efficiency and innovation, transparency and accountability, accessibility to government and civic participation, Seoul's e-government policy seeks to encourage the active engagement of citizens in ICT, while building a cooperative relationship between the Seoul Metropolitan Government (SMG) and city residents.
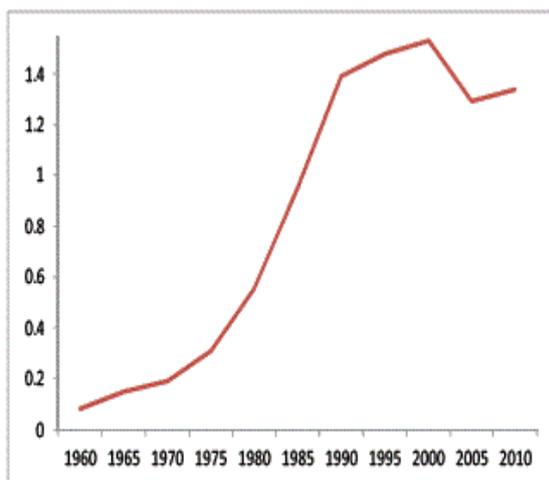
<Figure1> Number of Phone Subscription Per Household
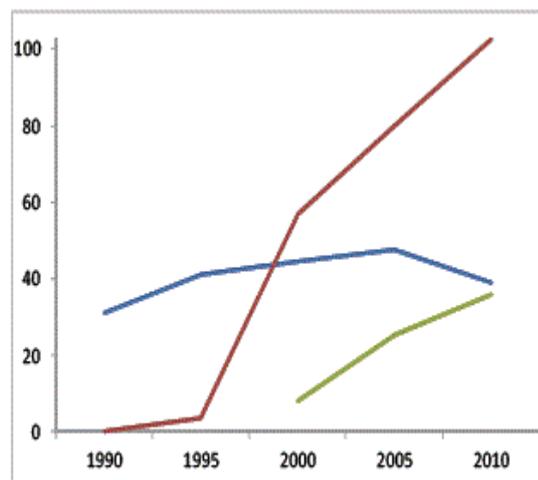
<Figure2> Trends in Landline Phone/Mobile Phone/Broadband Subscriptions

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SOLUTIONS

Solution 1: Government-driven promotion and Seoul's compliance

Since 1978 when the first Basic Plan for Administrative Computerization was laid out, introducing ICT technology to public administration became a main agenda item. Computerization, a step preceding informatization, is about using computers to manage large amounts of data. During this era, computing practices were at the punch card level: limited to simple tasks and compiling or processing databases. The focus was on developing inter-governmental networks to increase work efficiency. The major policies and projects undertaken by the central government since 1978 to promote e-government included the first and second Administrative Task Computerization Plans, Administrative Task Computerization Regulations, the National Basic Computing Network Project and the Administrative Computing Network Project Plan. Despite such endeavors, however, very few investors were willing to get involved because of the low level of technology and uncertainties. Seeing the benefits of computerization projects and e-government, the SMG was not swayed from continuing its investment and collaboration with the central government, allocating financial and institutional support on e-government projects from the early stages. For example, the Information System Planning Bureau provided critical assistance in ensuring citywide compliance.

Solution 2: Coordination and Direction via the SMG Information System Planning Bureau

The informatization project incrementally expanded in scope and scale since the city's early efforts in 1971 to computerize major administrative tasks such as budgeting, accounting and personnel affairs. In compliance with such national plans as the Basic Plan for Administrative Computerization and 1987's Act on Promotion & Usage of Computer Network, the SMG initiated an e-government transformation through its own plans. Incomplete implementation in the early days of digitalization projects, contrary to expectations, added to the workload at city hall. While partial sharing of administrative information was made possible, data management by individual agencies was still scattered. As a response to the call for a full integration of e-government services across different administrative divisions, the Information System Planning Bureau (ISPB) was launched in pursuit of administrative efficiency. The ISPB serves as the main implementation body that directs comprehensive planning and coordination of e-government projects. As of now, it consists of 4 directors, 23 teams and 4 divisions – 989 workers in total.

Solution 3: Enhanced Paradigm: From efficiency to transparency and citizen participation

Following the early efficiency-driven approach towards e-government, Seoul has moved its focus since the 2000s to digitalization and disclosure of administrative information to promote citizen participation and transparency in the administrative process. Measures taken to foster administrative efficiency include the Seoul e-Tax System and the 120 Dasan Call Center. Innovative measures are in operation for transparency in city administration, such as the Seoul Child Care portal and "Oasis," an online policy suggestion system.

ACHIEVEMENTS

Ranked No. 1 in Global E-Governance Survey for five consecutive years
A research study conducted by Rutgers University has identified Seoul as the top city in the field of e-government, where it ranked number 1 in terms of usability, service, and citizen participation - the best among cities in OECD countries.

Ranking	City	Score
1	Seoul	84.74
2	Prague	72.84
3	Hong Kong	62.83
4	New York	61.1
5	Singapore	58.81
6	Shanghai	57.41
7	Madrid	55.59
8	Vienna	55.48
9	Auckland	55.28
10	Toronto	52.87
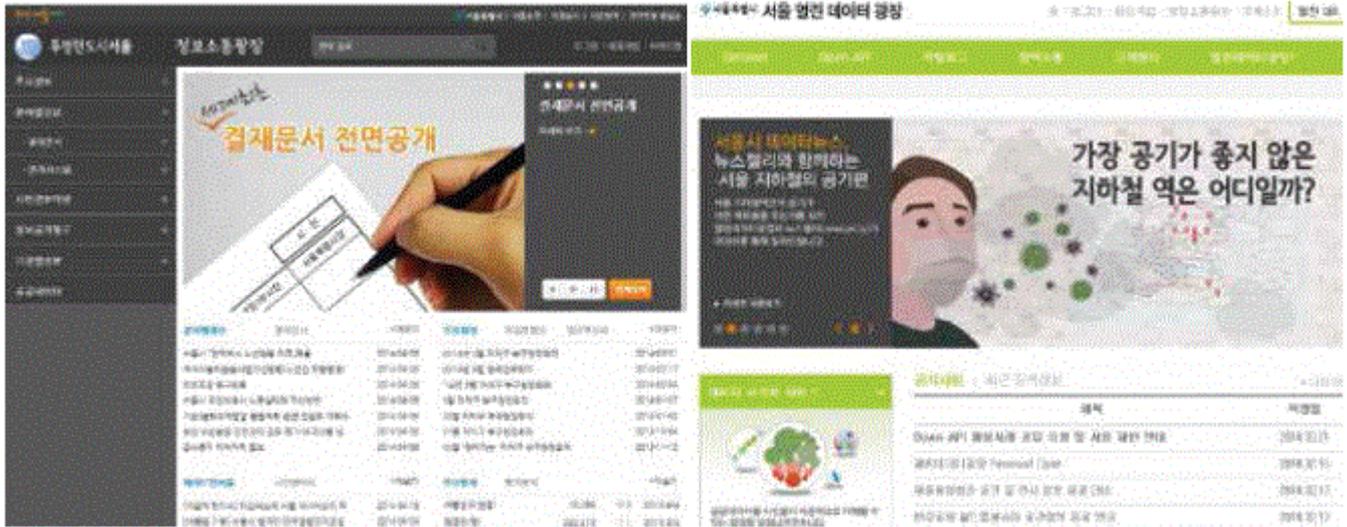
<Table 1> Rutgers' Global E-Governance Survey Ranking (2009)

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Disclosure of Public Information
"Open Government 2.0" has been created to push forward public participation in civil administrative services, disclosure of city documents and creation of an extensive public database.

The system is expected to create greater understanding between the citizens and SMG staff and promote growth of industries which benefit from public

data, establishing Seoul as one of the most advanced smart cities in the world.

<Figure7> Open Government Systems: SMG Document Center/ Open data Center

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Another facet of e-government achievement is demonstrated by online access to government information, document issuance, tax administration, and welfare services.

Improvement in ICT Work Environments and Realization of a Smart City

Upgrades are ongoing in ICT facilities to ensure sustainability in smart governance. The SMG is working to lay the groundwork for smart administrative services to meet a variety of administrative demands through enhanced support and integrated management. For example, the management of U-work Center boasts world-class ICT facilities to improve employee productivity and help tackle the low birth rate.

FACTORS OF SUCCESS

There are factors both within and outside the SMG behind Seoul's rise as an e-government powerhouse. Some key external factors include the central government's ambitious promotion and supply-driven strategies in the 1980s. Also instrumental was the cooperation between the central government and the SMG in implementation. As for the internal factors, institutionalization of the controlling body has been vital, as has been the collaboration among the staff in terms of ideas and resolutions, and the mayor's strong commitment and keen interest in administration that is both smart and open.