

To "e" Or Not To "e"

Three and a half years of e-government initiatives, roadmaps, road shows, blueprints, strategies, policies, fast track projects, as well as extensive worldwide tourism in the name of expanding our technological horizons in order to learn from the experiences of others, it seems that all that we can account for to date is a number of passive government websites with little useful information content and without any real e-services to speak of.

The expensive services of prominent international consulting houses and software developers were procured for the valid purposes of learning from their expertise in order to speed up our own progress to this effect. Yet today, we still haven't implemented any of the true e-government services or fast track projects that we first set out to do over three years ago.

While our e-government objectives are well-defined and thoroughly 21st century, the process and procedures for achieving them are still frustratingly slow and 19th century. Maybe the time is right for a soul searching look at the inner workings of our institutions entrusted with this *relatively straightforward task* in order to constructively evaluate their structure, mandate, procedures, their successes and the obstacles that still prevent them from reaching their objectives. Otherwise, our institutions risk becoming hostage to the very bureaucratic procedures that they set out to e-reform in the first place.

Our private sector IT companies started to prove their international competitiveness with various degrees of success. Competing both on quality and pricing, they now provide products and services to an ever-increasing number of clients (including some government departments) in the USA, Europe, the Gulf as well as the Far East. If anything, this speaks for their flexibility, technical capability and cost effectiveness. Their individual and collective experiences should be more actively sought for the purposes of achieving a truly "Jordanian" e-government success story.

If this doesn't qualify as the IT perspective of the "Jordan First" slogan, I don't know what does.