Public services – just a click away

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNMENT CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER

The prestigious Stockholm Challenge Award.

Hong Kong's status as a leading digital city has benefited greatly from the government's "Digital 21" information technology strategy. A core part of this is Hong Kong's e-government programme and its flagship Electronic Service Delivery (ESD) Scheme, which serves as an interactive and transactional link between the government and the community.

ESD is the government's bilingual portal that delivers services via a highly secure and convenient online electronic platform. With its innovation in blending public and value-added commercial services in a one-stop and customer-oriented way, it won the Asia Best Practice Award in the e-government category of the World Summit Award in 2003 and the first prize under the Public Services and Democracy category of the Stockholm Challenge Award in 2001.

Both awards demonstrate Hong Kong's competitive edge as a pioneer in the development of e-government. It reinforces Hong Kong's image as a leading digital city in the globally connected world and shows that the efforts of the Hong Kong SAR Government to promote a cyber community are being recognised internationally.

The World Summit Award aims to recognise and showcase the world's best e-products in content, creativity and application, as well as to bridge the digital divide around the world. It includes eight categories: e-learning, e-business, e-entertainment, e-culture, e-government, e-health, e-science and e-inclusion. ESD competed with more than 800 entries from 136 countries in the e-government category.

The Stockholm Challenge Award is an internationally recognised IT-awards programme. In 2001, there were more than 740 projects from 90 countries competing in seven categories, namely Public Services and Democracy, Culture and Entertainment, Health and Quality of Life, Education, New Economy, Environment, and Global Village.

Organised by the City of Stockholm to help bridge the digital divide in the global community, the award, according to Mayor Carl Cederschiold, would become the "Nobel Prize" for information society development in 10 years' time.

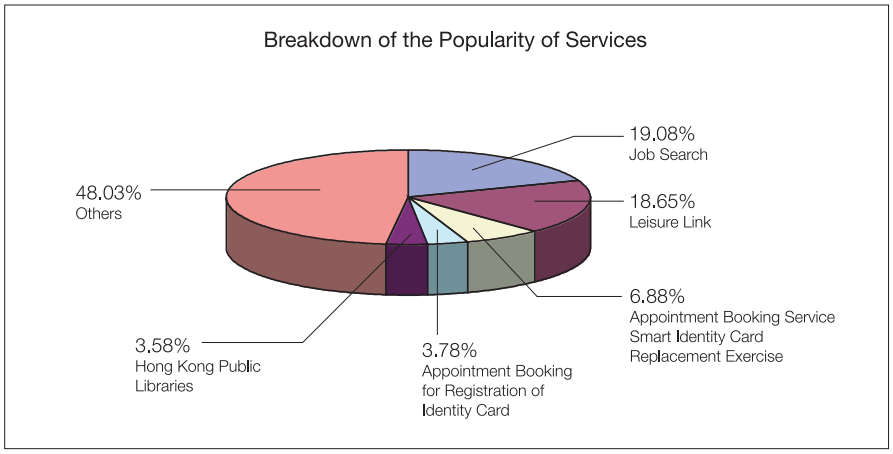
The panel of judges was impressed by the provision of online public and commercial services in a one-stop manner, implemented under a public-private sector partnership.

Web services delivered via one-stop-shop portal

Launched in December, 2000, the ESD portal (http://www.esd.gov.hk) opens up many possibilities for innovation and improvements to government services. Its goal is to offer citizens and businesses the most convenient, user-friendly and secure online solutions to meet their everyday needs for public and commercial services. And its popularity has increased sharply. The number of ESD transactions conducted in 2003/04 is 57% higher than those conducted in 2002/03.

ESD currently provides more than 180 types of public services from over 50 government departments/public agencies.

With ESD, the efficiency and transparency of the government in providing quality online services and access to information to users are greatly improved. Among the most popular services, "Job Search" and "Leisure Link" account for more than 19% and 18% of the total number of transactions respectively. "Appointment Booking Service for Hong Kong Smart Identity Card Replacement Exercise", "Appointment Booking for Registration of Identity Card" and "Access to Hong Kong Public Libraries" are also well received by users.



Percentage of total number of transactions on the ESD website.

Apart from meeting the increasing service demand of the community through improving the quality and accessibility of public services, ESD also contributes to the development of e-commerce in Hong Kong. Leaving the door for innovative ideas wide open, the private sector operator is allowed to provide value-added commercial services using the same ESD platform to better serve customers' needs. The private sector involvement also provides incentives for better quality service delivery to the community. The "Easy Change of Address" service at ESD is a joined-up e-government initiative enabling users to notify 12 departments of their change of address using a single online form. The private sector operator has expanded the service to cover 12 other commercial entities/charity organisations. More departments and non-government entities are being recruited. Through ESD, couples going to marry can make use of the online public service to register a marriage date. At the same time, they can also enjoy the value-added commercial services of the interactive banquet information enquiry and wedding-planner service.

ESD enables the community to enjoy the benefits of e-government

To serve the public in a customer-friendly way, the services provided via the ESD portal are organised around people's everyday needs, instead of using the traditional categorisation of government departments. Citizens and businesses can also enjoy a number of service advantages through ESD:

Vision impaired persons receive educational training on ESD services.

Priority Services

- Appointment Booking for Giving of Marriage Notice: Appointment bookings can be made 14 days before the notice giving period, thus obviating the need to queue up;
- Appointment Booking Service for the Hong Kong Smart ID Card Replacement Exercise: The desired venue and time slot for replacing your smart ID card can be selected in advance without queuing for a tag;

Personalised Services

- Leisure Link: A personal profile can be created to save time for booking public sports facilities;

Cheaper Services

- Government Bookstore and Statistical Bookstore: A 25% discount is offered for the purchase of softcopies of statistical publications as against a hardcopy, and the same discount is offered for the online purchase of selected hardcopies of statistical and other government publications as opposed to purchasing through the conventional channels*;

One-stop Services

- Easy Change of Address: Citizens and businesses can inform multiple government departments of their new address using one single form; and

Instant Information

- Bankruptcy/Compulsory Winding-up Search: Instant information can be obtained online without waiting at the counters.

The way forward

To continue to excel in e-government, the government will broaden the scope of the e-government programme, including the ESD Scheme, and focus more sharply on cross-functional business process integration, service quality and effectiveness. In particular, it will seek to bring value to customers as well as to the government. The government will continue to improve the quality and user-friendliness of its ESD services so that they meet the needs of citizens and businesses better.

**The 25% discount for selected statistical and other government publications will last until end July, 2004.*