

Information Communications Technology (ICT) Innovations

Governor Mike Huckabee's eNewsroom:

URL <http://www.arkansas.gov/governor/newsroom/index.php>

The public has access to news channels, weather channels and television interviews 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, but can you count on mainstream media to quickly get the word out for you on issues of importance to your constituents? Keeping taxpayers informed with access to timely, accurate information is absolutely crucial to ensure success with any government program. Taxpayers want to know about issues or decisions the people who represent them are facing, plus the initiatives and results of the actions taken on their behalf.

Hurricanes Katrina and Rita brought more evacuees to Arkansas per capita than any other state emphasizing the importance of a direct communications link between the executive branch of government and the public. The critical need for a means to quickly distribute information to the public is re-emphasized every time a tornado strikes an Arkansas community which has already happened twice this year. Clear unfiltered, unedited communication is essential in times of any natural disaster, man-made catastrophe or any other event having such an impact on people.

Governor Mike Huckabee's office is always quick to adopt the latest technology to improve communication with citizens of Arkansas. Governor Huckabee pioneered an initiative creating a centralized repository so you can easily understand his office's actions, objectives, pending legislation and accomplishments. This initiative is comprised of a website and several online applications to create a forum called eNewsroom.

New Online Services

Governor's Electronic Messaging System (GEMS) – Governor Mike Huckabee implemented a "blog" named the Governor's Electronic Messaging System or commonly called "GEMS". A blog is a frequent, chronological publication of personal thoughts and Web links. Citizens of Arkansas can easily share thoughts with the Governor electronically by registering for an account online on the Governor's eNewsroom URL <http://www.arkansas.gov/governor/gems/index.html>.

Podcasts – Podcasting is the method of distributing multimedia files, such as audio programs or music videos, over the Internet using either the RSS or Atom syndication formats, for playback on mobile devices and personal computers. The term **podcast**, like 'radio', can mean both the content and the method of delivery. A podcast however is distinguished by its ability to be downloaded automatically using software capable of reading RSS or Atom feeds.

Now, citizens of Arkansas can listen to or watch Governor Mike Huckabee when they want, where they want and how they want as events unfold. All they need is access to the internet.

Columns – All of Governor Mike Huckabee's columns for 2006 are posted online and can be easily viewed or automatically sent to a registered user by setting up an RSS feed. RSS is a format for syndicating news and other important information instantly.

Radio Addresses – All radio addresses for 2006 are posted online and can be easily viewed in written format or the audio version downloaded to your computer so you can hear for yourself every word that was said.

Events – Current events for 2006 are posted and easily viewed or downloaded. The end user can also automate this process by setting up an RSS feed.

Media Archives – You can easily find online historical news releases from as far back as 1996 searching by year, month or subject. The search results are displayed instantly. The end user simply clicks the subject matter they want to view.

A. Business problem and solution including length of time in operation

Traditional news services are driven by the headline of the day. Sometimes information that is critical to Arkansans is not what editors would consider news worthy. The state's chief executive needed an immediate way to communicate with citizens that is unfiltered, without interference and not tied to mainstream news schedules.

Governor Huckabee's eNewsroom and website fill the need with access 24/7/365. It is available to everyone via the internet. The user friendly service can be tailored to meet the requirements of anyone utilizing it. The centralized forum offers several methods to view or download information. For example, information is easily viewed or downloaded depending upon user preference. You can register for automatic feeds or wait and quickly view particular documents or information at your leisure. The taxpayer is no longer restricted by office hours or hindered by not knowing who to contact.

The Governor's website has been in production for over 5 years. Additional online services were implemented in 2005.

B. Significance of the improvement of the operation of government

Given the size of state government and the number of entities involved, it was not uncommon for information to be stored in disparate systems in multiple agencies. Now, there is an infrastructure providing a centralized repository for information, events, speeches, press releases, appointments, etc. This infrastructure is not only scalable but built to be user-friendly. Data is easily added, archived or even restored.

The site experiences 2.2 million hits per month.

C. Benefits realized by service recipients, taxpayers, agency or state

The devastation of Hurricane Katrina brought tens of thousands of evacuees to Arkansas seeking relief in the form of shelter, food, clothing and medicine, plus education, jobs and transportation. Governor Huckabee's online presence provided evacuees a central location with the essential information to get what they needed. It also provided thousands of Arkansas citizens wanting to help with information they required to provide assistance to the flood of evacuees. The devastation of Hurricane Katrina sent more evacuees to Arkansas per capita than any other state but the Natural State met the challenge with innovative methods of communication and cooperation aided by the critical information distributed through Governor Huckabee's online presence.

D. Realized return on investment, short-term/long-term payback (include summary calculations)

The numerous phone calls and manual hours invested in researching or locating data is greatly reduced. State agencies save time by easily staying abreast of current and historical events with a few clicks of the mouse. Less

time is required answering phone calls since information is readily available via the World Wide Web saving thousands of dollars worth of personnel time and resources. Citizens have access to services faster since they can find what they needed quicker and easier. For a citizen in need the value cannot be overstated.

These online services were developed utilizing existing personnel in cooperation with the Information Network of Arkansas, a public-private partnership.