

Government and the Mobile Advantage

Tips, facts, lessons, and steps for keeping pace with the communication curve

Meeting citizens where they are

“An informed citizenry is the only true repository of the public will.”

—Thomas Jefferson

Today, government agencies of all shapes and sizes pass legislation or create policies to publish information and create transparency. But the information needs of our communities are changing rapidly – publishing notices to the local newspaper is no longer an effective way to keep the citizenry informed. Today, citizens are found on their mobile phones, tablets, and laptops, ever connected to the internet. Also, unlike the newspaper age, these devices allow for the interaction between government and citizen to be two-way. Delivering information to and getting feedback from the devices they use the most is the only way governments can hope to stay connected with communities in the new mobile information age.

By the end of 2013, smartphone internet access will have overtaken traditional desktop PC access. By 2015, more people in the United States and Canada will access the Internet through mobile devices than through PCs. This is happening for one very simple reason: convenience. Creating convenience is the primary impetus behind innovation in technology; the easier something is to use, the more it will be used. Government agencies regularly need to keep abreast of the latest technologies and their impact on convenience.



GOVERNMENT AND THE MOBILE ADVANTAGE

Community members expect mobile convenience now. They want to be able to use their phone to access services, legislative information, agendas, minutes, and meeting video. They also want to be able to use their mobile devices to engage, give feedback, offer ideas, help prioritize initiatives, and create a better community. Current public participation policies that require people to attend meetings at a certain date and time every month do not foster meaningful or convenient engagement. Today, government must bring the discussion to the community members anytime, anywhere, at their convenience.

Where is mobile going?

In 2014 there will be more mobile subscriptions than people on Earth. So, while that covers just about everybody, the real question is what are people doing with mobile internet access? The content, while largely dominated by social networking, is seeing a growth rate of 60% each year in mobile video. That trend is expected to continue at least through 2018. Today, some networks are averaging 2.6 GB of video data per subscription per month. That's not all funny pet videos.

Video clearly has become an important part of research, and it is now expected as part of the public record. The City of Santa Rosa recently enabled public smartphone access to their live and on-demand public meetings; dramatically improving public engagement, it also helped them increase video traffic by 3,000 hits in just two months. But, it's not just citizens who want video – elected officials and government staff frequently need to see exactly what was and how something was said in a meeting.



Mobile Trends

Time spent on smartphones
is increasing



in 2013



Smartphones will overtake
desktop internet traffic

GOVERNMENT AND THE MOBILE ADVANTAGE

Of course, the digestion of video content isn't the only thing happening in the mobile-verse; cloud solutions are also on the rise. These platforms move all of the data processing and storage to a server cloud so that a mobile device can effectively replace desktop computers, syncing data between central software systems and user devices. This is opening doors for innovations in efficiency and collaboration internally within government organizations and externally between government and the public. With the proliferation of smartphones surpassing the 50% mark for all new mobile phones sold earlier this year, the market is positively exploding with possibilities.

How mobile is being used successfully in government today

The majority of mobile government solutions focus on the citizens. Government agencies are either developing their own, or in some cases holding hackathon contests for the tech savvy citizen to build solutions with the open data the government provides. The impact has been tremendous, but has only just begun. We're seeing apps that are replacing 311 service calls, such as graffiti, pothole, and disrepair reporting, all of which use photos, videos, and geo-location data. Many apps are also popping up regarding public transportation or available parking. There are emergency services, hunting area, alternative fuel locator, and tourism apps. Here are some examples of real apps out there in action:

For Keeping Citizens Informed

- ✓ **City of Opelika, AL App** – Everything local, including a calendar of events, news, and alerts. It also has a way for citizens to make reports.
- ✓ **Utah Professional License Lookup** – This allows citizens to look up the license status of service providers like doctors, dentists, nurses, contractors, funeral directors, etc.

in 2014
App stores will have provided



GOVERNMENT AND THE MOBILE ADVANTAGE
For Citizens to Inform Government

- ✓ **Street Bump** – wildly innovative, this app helps improve community streets by automatically collecting road condition data as the user drives, reporting pot-holes, and other driving aberrations that allow the city to fix short-term problems and plan long-term for the future.
- ✓ **Lincoln Action Center** – an app to serve as an alternative to 311, the LAC app now facilitates 25% of all 311 reports.

For Citizens Engagement and Public Feedback

- ✓ **Wellington City Council Draft Annual Plan (2013-2014) App** – Simple but effective, not only is there a video message from the mayor, and the initial draft of the Annual plan, there’s an infographic explaining their process for how they got to the current annual plan. The app then offers ways to provide feedback .
- ✓ **Land Use Public Comment** – allows the general public and other interested parties to comment on proposed land use cases being heard in their local government.

iLegislate® - A Chief of Staff in an App

The digital agenda and community engagement tablet app, iLegislate®, by Granicus®, enables elected officials and government staff to review meeting agendas, supporting documents, and archived videos. It collapses agenda packets, including their related documents, that often reach page tallies of over 300 into an easily searchable digital document. Of course, the nature of mobility is instant access, and in this case, that means that as soon as an agenda is published, it is automatically synched. No more physical agenda delivery routes or city hall pick-ups. That alone can save budget funds for paper and printing, time and resources for management and distribution, and hundreds of thousands of trees.

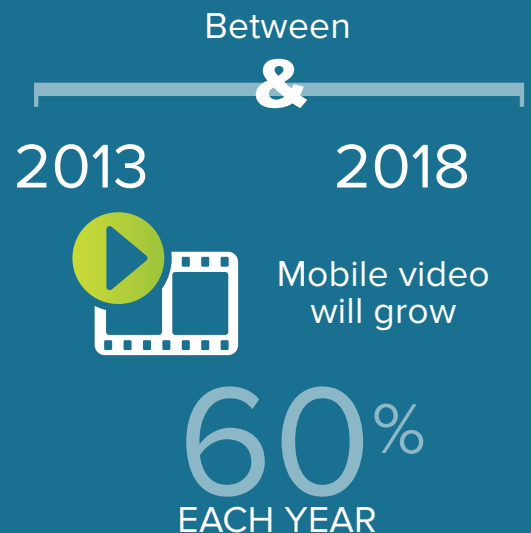
“We’re getting much better information with the mobile app. We get the GPS location, so we don’t have to send a crew to go out and search for the spot. We’re getting more photos, which makes the service request process more efficient.”

*Terry Lowe, Systems Coordinator,
Information Services, Lincoln, NE*

in 2015



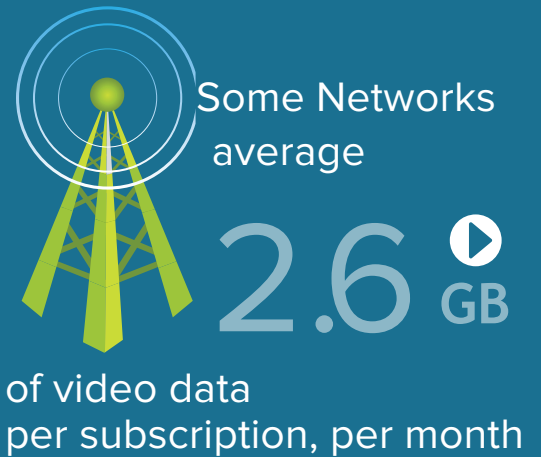
More people will access the internet by smartphone



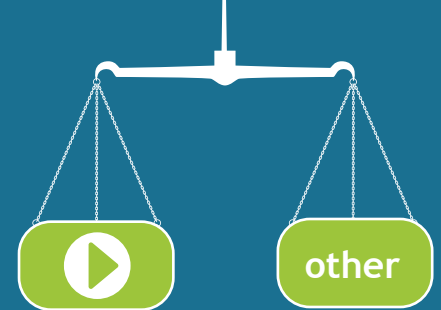
GOVERNMENT AND THE MOBILE ADVANTAGE


Integrating with other Granicus services, each agenda item in the document can be cross indexed with meeting video, or linked to more extensive data such as legislation details, voting histories, supporting documents, and meeting video history. Never before has an elected official or a staffer been able to tap their finger on an agenda and instantly see video of a previous meeting discussion on the item. Not too long ago, that was called sorcery.

When integrated with the Granicus Citizen Participation Suite, iLegislate really shines, adding the ability to listen to feedback from the public anytime, anywhere. Elected officials and staff members can get virtual public opinion polls on agenda items. They can also read community members' comments on the agenda or agenda items in preparation for an upcoming meeting. Analysis is another bonus of digital data, showing supporting, opposing and neutral opinions by percentages and color coding.



by 2018



Half of all internet
traffic will be video

GOVERNMENT AND THE MOBILE ADVANTAGE


Users can browse community improvement ideas from the public and see the public's own feedback on those ideas. They can see maps of where engaged citizens are coming from and solicit ideas via Facebook and Twitter. Users can even follow ideas and get alerts on new idea activity. iLegislate is a model government app as it addresses process, preparation, research, video, collaboration, efficiency, and convenience. Here in the middle of 2013, we're really at the dawning of mobile government innovation. There are only great things to come.

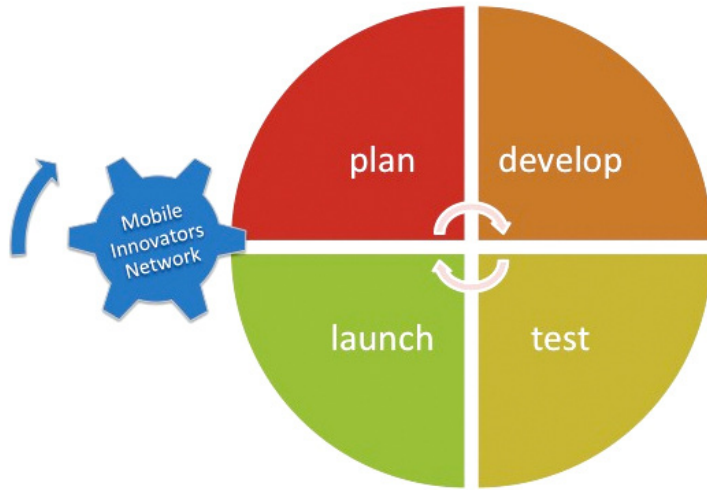
Developing a Mobile Gov Strategy

In many cases, apps aren't necessary; a simple mobile enabled website with the right functionality is just as effective and practically the same thing. Successful mobility is all about focusing on user behavior and making the key choices for an experience that will keep citizens returning and engaging. The General Services Administration's Digital Services Information Center has an online Mobile App Development Program designed to help local government agencies develop effective mobile apps and strategies.

Today
Smart phones are
524,288x
more powerful
than the
computer that



Mobile App Development Program



But mobile isn't strictly the market of the citizen. Mobile operations management – form submissions, procedure execution, contact management, resource access, etc. – is a huge factor for government agencies. From water departments to hospitals and schools, apps designed to keep staff informed, alert, and efficient are becoming key tools and the new way that things are done.

As with all new technology endeavors, it is important to consider reason, philosophy, impact, scope, integration, and deployment. Here is a six-step list for getting started and going mobile:

1) Become a Mobile-First Organization

Mobile strategies should not be considered secondary or alternates to existing processes, they should be the primary focus. All solutions should start with mobile in mind.

2) Clearly Identify and Prioritize Problems

Mobile solutions need a laser focus, otherwise they don't make sense and don't get used. Carefully consider your business processes and what steps involve paper, a desktop computer, communication, or presence at a specific location.

In the **last** half of

2012

Granicus government videos and data were viewed



5 million times

251 thousand times via mobile device

1.8 million unique citizens engaged

and then grew...

In the **first** half of

2013



15 million views

784 thousand mobile views

3.2 million unique citizens engaged

3) Avoid Wheel Reinvention

Once you know what kind of solutions are needed, find out what solutions already exist for that problem. If it's already out there, it probably makes more sense to use that one and skip step four.

4) Develop User-First

Like having an organizational mobile-first philosophy, the project philosophy should be user-first. The less touches to accomplish any particular step, the more effective and easily adopted the solution becomes.

5) Internal Deployment

After development testing, a beta release to internal users is always helpful. For a solution that will be for use by the public, start by asking all of your organization's members to start using it every day. Don't forget to collect feedback!

6) External Deployment

The Field of Dreams concept of, "if you build it, they will come," doesn't work for apps. People need to know about it. Create a campaign to promote your public solutions: put it prominently on the front page of your website, issue a press release, discuss with journalists, write about it in blogs, talk about it on social media and in your local Patch.com site. Repeat this process as needed.

Going mobile is no small journey, but the payoff is immense. Keep it fun, keep it focused. Good luck!

How will you



Mobilize?