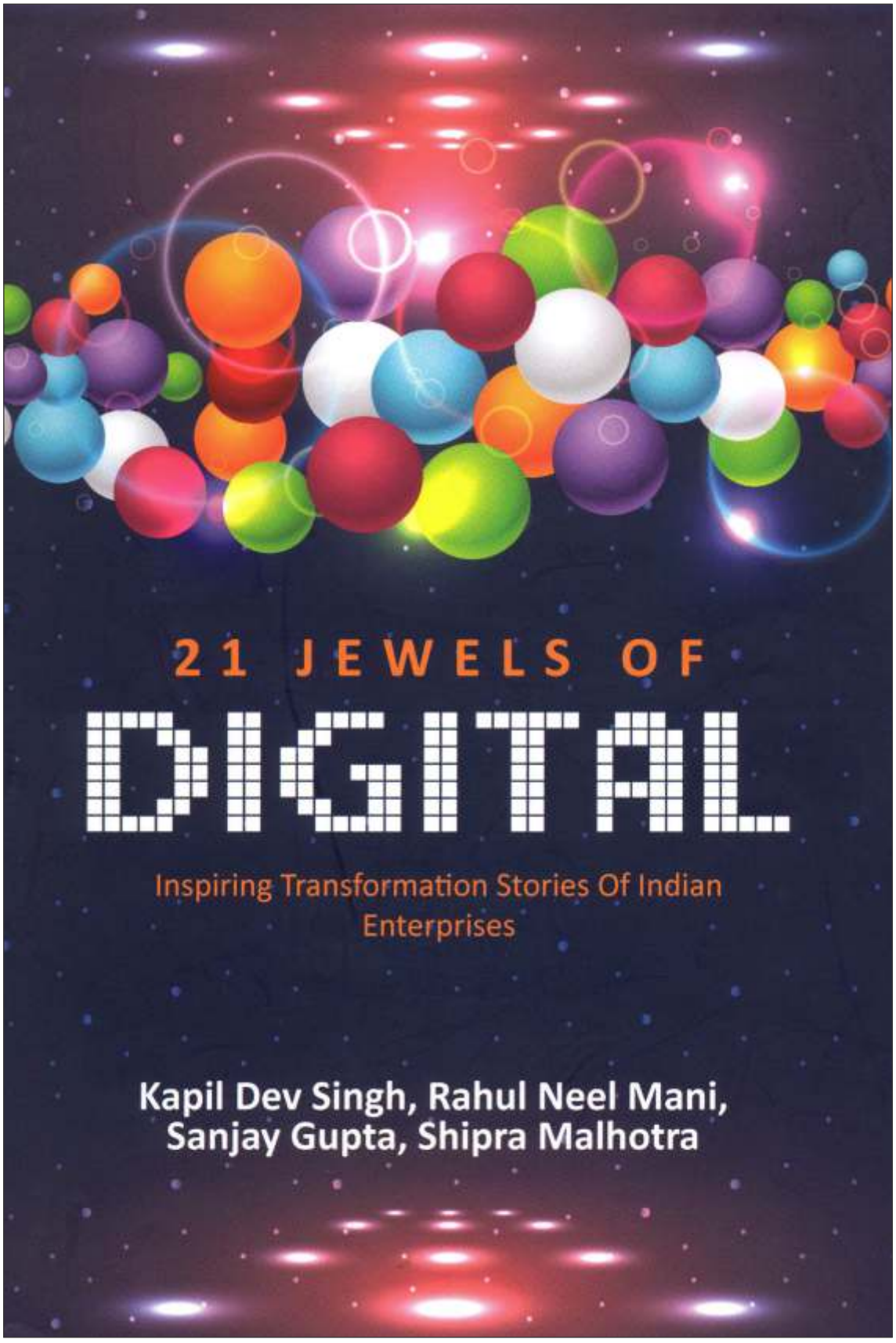
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4.3. CENTRAL PASSPORT ORGANIZATION

Achieving Service Excellence using Digital

Abstract

The Digital India drive by the central government envisions more effective and efficient services for the citizens. Transformation in the Indian Passport services by the Central Passport Organization[10] presents a unique example of success for others to learn from and emulate. Highlighting the three aspects/pillars of success *viz.* citizen proximity, process reengineering, and digital infrastructure, the case study brings out a clear perspective on how the success was achieved. There is more to it than the three pillars/aspects visible on the ground. Systemic resources, bold leadership, public-private partnership model, organic change management approach, and ecosystem support were some of the other key reasons that help the department succeed. The case study also argues for the 'centrality of citizen' empowerment for success. As the ecosystem around the passport services continues to evolve, further improvements in efficiency and effectiveness can be expected.

Relevance

Indian Passport Service was one of the 27 mission mode projects (MMPs) selected under the National e-Governance Plan (NeGP) of the Government of India (2005). It was initiated with the core objective of 'delivering passport services to the citizens in a timely, transparent, accessible, reliable manner and in a comfortable environment through streamlined processes by a committed,

10 Name-Central Passport Organization; HQ Location-New Delhi; Joint Secretary & Chief Passport Officer-Muktesh Pardeshi; Web Site-www.passportindia.gov.in

trained and motivated workforce'. After over a decade, transformation in the quality of passport services to the citizens makes it as one of the most successful MMPs. The success of the project can surely be a source of learning for other MMPs as well as the larger domain of Digital India drive.

Description

The Consular, Passport and Visa (CPV) Division of the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) provides passport services through Central Passport Organization (CPO) and its network of Passport Offices and Passport SevaKendras[11]. The CPO was created in 1959 as a Subordinate Office of the Ministry and is headed by the Joint Secretary and Chief Passport Officer, who also acts as Appellate Authority under the Passports Act 1967 and the Head of Department under the Delegation of Financial Powers Rules 1978. The total sanctioned strength of the Central Passport Organization Cadre was 2697 as on 31 December 2014. In addition, 21 posts including 15 technical and 6 supporting staff were created by the Union Cabinet decision in 2007 to man the Project Management Unit (PMU) of the Passport Seva Project.

The inclusion of Passport Services in the mission mode projects was aimed at improving the effectiveness (quality of services and experience of citizens) and the operational efficiency. Over the last few years there has been an increase in demand for passport and related services. The existing infrastructure, systems and processes were falling short of catering to the growing demand and heightened expectations of the citizens with respect to service delivery. Besides, there was also a need to comply to international travel standards which weren't met with the existing systems.

Thus, to augment and improve the delivery of passport services to Indian citizens, the MEA launched the Passport Seva[12] Project (PSP) with an aim to provide:

- Better reach and accessibility to citizens/applicants
- Comfortable environment with best-in-class facilities
- Multiple channels for providing information and status updates

11 Passport Service Centers
12 Seva is a Hindi word meaning Service

- Transparency and efficiency with improved, standardized and automated processes
- Better interoperability with other departments and government agencies
- Secure, Scalable and extendable model to handle growing demand and interoperability needs
- Real time centralized repository of passport applicants accessible to all Passport Offices, Missions/Posts, Immigration and other Government departments
- Compliance with international travel standards
- Platform for issuance of e-Passports in future
- Up-to-date information and data at any time for effective decision making

The Journey

The PSP progressed through three broad phases since 2007.

The first phase 2007–2009 included the initiation of the project by creating a detailed project report (DPR), floating a request for proposal (RFP), awarding the contract through a tendering process, overhaul of the data center (DC), disaster recovery site (DC), network operating center (NOC), security operating center (SOC), call center supporting 17 Indian languages, designing of application based upon a complete process reengineering and setting up of a portal for citizen interface.

The second phase 2009–2012 was essentially the implementation phase leading to complete transformation from old to a new service paradigm. It included piloting through 4 Passport SevaKendras (Passport Service Centers), obtaining a certificate of successful piloting from STQC[13], pan India roll out through 37 Regional Passport Offices and 77 Passport SevaKendras (PSKs) and obtaining a successful Go-live certification from STQC.

13 Standardization Testing and Quality Certification (STQC) Directorate is an attached office of the Department of Electronics and Information Technology (DeitY), Government of India. It provides quality assurance services in the area of Electronics and IT through countrywide network of laboratories and centers

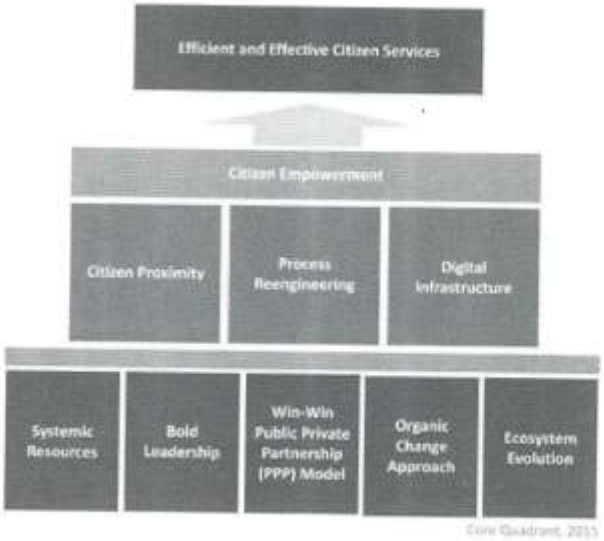

Figure 6- Decoding the Success at Passport Services

The third phase 2013 onward focuses on running the operations and improvising upon the processes that were put in place. During this phase, new functionalities like online payment and access through a mobile app, enhanced security,-, Integration with District Police for expediting police verification, integration with Common Service Center Scheme of DeitY, GoI, to bridge the digital divide, integration with the Unique Identification (UID) program of GOI and process certifications have been added. A host of APIs have also been created for integration with external government entities like the Digital Locker[14] scheme and police system for integration in the future. All these initiatives have one common aim-Making passport-issuance process easy and-speedy for the citizens.

Decoding the Success

On the surface, the nexus of the three pillars/aspects *viz.* citizen proximity, process reengineering, and digital infrastructure has empowered the citizen experience and process-overhauling. However, the aspects below the surface

14 Digital Locker is one of the key initiatives under the Digital India Programme-External website that opens in a new window. A beta version of the same has been already released by the Department of Electronics and Information Technology (DeitY), Govt. of India (https://digilocker.gov.in/). Digital Locker is aimed at minimizing the usage of physical documents and enable sharing of e-documents across agencies.

need equal appreciation for playing a critical role in creating a strong foundation for the three pillars/aspects to evolve. These aspects include the systemic resources, bold leadership, win-win public-private partnership model, organic change management approach, and ecosystem evolution. There still remains an ample scope for improvement on the larger ecosystem side. As the ecosystem around the Passport Seva evolves with time, further improvements in efficiency and effectiveness will be seen (Figure 6).

Let's understand what each of these aspects means.

Empowering the Citizens

Empowerment is a direct function of mind set of the service provider (in this case, the Government). A mind set of expecting citizens to come to the government for seeking services versus the one of reaching out to the citizens with the service can create a big difference. Starting from what citizens want and then mapping the process backwards to provide service is an outcome of the latter. Passport Seva Program adopted the mind set of starting with the citizen and drawing the process backward.

Earlier, the citizens were coming to the Regional Passport Offices located only in bigger cities. This was not only inconvenient, but also cumbersome due to plethora of paper work, which was absolutely unclear to them. Often they would reach out to the touts/agents for help.

Through Passport Seva the Government decided to enhance its **citizen-proximity**. A complete change in the approach was adopted by opening 77 PSKs at locations across India where there was a high demand for passport services. They are manned by both the-service partner staff (at the front end) and the Government staff (at the backend). Beyond these 77 PSKs, outreach programs like Passport Mela[15], Passport Seva Camps[16], and Passport Adalats[17] are also conducted to redress the grievances of passport applicants. Moreover, the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs' eMigrate System was integrated with

15 A Hindi word meaning Fair or large public Gathering, Passport Mela is conducted at Passport SevaKendras in week-ends

16 Where a temporary center is opened in remote areas like Leh in Jammu and Kashmir for a defined period, citizens in those areas can come to these temporary centers and apply for passport services

17 A Hindi word meaning Court (for Arbitration)

the PSP system. The extension of the PSP system to include the 183-Indian Missions and Posts abroad in the near future is also on the cards. Also, a special drive is created every year for the Haj Pilgrims.

A 24x7 National Call Centre has been set up, which provides real-time status and up-to date information in 17 languages using a toll free number (1800-258–1800). The Call Centre receives over 22,000 calls per day. The portal[18] also provides up-to-date real time information. The Project is integrated with the States/UTs' Police system for verification of applicants' personal details, with India Post for postal delivery and with ISP Nashik for supply management of passport booklets. The Project also provides real time up-to-date information to 183-Indian Missions and Posts abroad as well as the Immigration authorities.

The applicants can also give their feedback through various channels like feedback forms at the PSKs, touch-screen facility available at select PSKs, emails to PSP help desks, online through the PSP portal and the call center. The feedback is collected on four parameters, cleanliness and ambience, courtesy, efficiency/service delivery, overall experience.

A complete overhaul of the process was undertaken through **process reengineering**. The process now starts digitally with the citizen applying and paying online. They can select from defined set of services available, *e.g.* new application,-reissuing of application, change of address, PCC service etc. Once done, the appointment can be booked at the nearest PSK, which would give a very specific date and time of the applicant citizen's choice. The online interface clearly states which documents the applicants need to carry with them to the PSK. Upon reaching the PSK on the day of appointment, the applicant completes the process by moving through different points (or windows), *e.g.* taking a photo, recording the biometrics, scanning and uploading the documents, cross-verification by the Government staff etc. All functions being undertaken in the system are signed with digital signature certificate for non-repudiation. Having completed this process, the applicant finally moves out from the exit door. The completion of the process takes less than an hour and barring the cases with exceptions (like pending criminal cases in Indian Courts or missing documents), the applicant does not need to visit the PSK (or the RPO) again. Application status can be tracked online and can also be known through SMS alerts. The passport is finally dispatched to the address provided

18 http://passportindia.gov.in

by the applicant. Between the visit to the PSK and getting the passport, the police work is carried out in a transparent manner by the RPO through the district SP[19] office. Only in case of exceptions, the applicant is advised during the first visit to get in touch with the RPO with the required documents, upon completion of which they don't need to come back to the PSK (or the RPO). This is a single-directional, simple, transparent and citizen centric process.

This is a marked departure from the earlier practice where the citizen had to travel a long distance and wait for hours in the queue at the RPO (a place full of touts), submit a lot of attested documents and would need to visit again and again in want of clarifying doubts, filing of missing papers etc. The exceptions were also discovered at a later point, for which the applicants were asked to reach out to their respective RPOs. Moreover, to get the attestation done, applicants were required to find a gazetted/government officer in their locality. There was lack of visibility on the status of the application, lack of systemic capability to enforce accountability and lack of transparency.

Now, an end to end process is enabled by the underlying robust IT and **digital infrastructure**. Passport Seva Program (PSP) has gone the digital way setting an example of a true digital enterprise (baring a few areas). Some of the remarkable digital take away points of PSP are:

- *Anytime, anywhere access*
- *Process transparency and accountability*
- *Governance to e-governance to m-governance*
- *Technology to its business value by leveraging the digital platform*

A complete overhaul of the IT and digital infrastructure was part of the contract with TCS including the following areas:

1. Software design, development / procurement / customization, and installation, data digitization, and migration, training & documentation for services/functions
2. Establishment of Passport SevaKendras (PSKs), Data Centre (DC), Disaster Recovery Centre (DRC), Central Passport Printing Facility (CPPF) and Passport Call Centre (PCC)
3. Assessment, procurement and establishment of IT Infrastructure at

19 Superintendent of Police, under whom the local police stations come in a district

PSKs, DC, DRC, CPPF and PCC.

4. Upgrading of Passport Back Offices (PBOs) with respect to IT infrastructure
5. Operations and maintenance of entire Passport Seva System environment (service delivery, software & hardware warranty and maintenance support) for six years from the date of going live. The operations and maintenance shall include IT infrastructure maintenance support at all the PBOs.
6. Design & execution of change management, training & communication strategy for successful implementation and operation
7. Sourcing of personnel for the operation and management of the Passport Seva system
8. Obtaining ISO (9001, 27001, 20000) certifications for the Passport Seva system
9. Some Special requirements with respect to SP's responsibilities
10. Continuously striving to achieve the 'metrics of success' of the project, to be defined by the MEA.

The Passport Seva System has been developed on J2EE architecture and deployed on a redundant set of network components, storage components, web, application and database servers. The Passport Seva System deployment follows a multi-tier model. There are three key subsystems of the Passport Seva System:

1. The Passport Seva Front Office Subsystem is the user interface (UI) and delivery channel for providing access to passport services to the external users. These include the citizens, PSK staff, and other web users like foreign missions, immigration offices and police. The transactions initiated by this subsystem are routed to the back office system via Passport Gateway.
2. The Passport Seva Back Office Subsystem provides the user interface to the internal users. Internal users are primarily MEA/CPV users. This subsystem hosts the processing logic and the repository of passport related data.
3. The Passports Gateway is a critical element of the passport system

architecture, which provides secured and reliable message routing between passport services delivery channels and the back office system.

Passport is an important government document and ensuring that it is issued only to legitimate Indian citizens is critical. Involving a private partner in the process could have been viewed as a security compromise, but in several ways the current system is more effective in ensuring security. First, the decision is made in the presence of applicants, as opposed to the earlier practice where there was almost no interaction. Second, the bio-metrics are recorded and credentials are verified during applicant's visit to the PSK. Third, the key data is still in the custody of the Central Passport Office, who also has the final decision making power. The data cannot be accessed or system-level changes cannot be made by the private partner alone. A two-key authentication (part of the Passports Gateway) ensures that the participation and authority of the passport office is a must. The major decision-making is supported by digital signatures, which ensures transparency and accountability.

The PSP started exploring big data analytics in 2012, which is helping them in uncovering the hidden patterns, unknown correlations and other useful information that can be used to make better decisions. With big data analytics, they can analyze huge volumes of data that conventional analytics and business intelligence solutions can't touch. High-performance analytics is necessary to process such voluminous data, in order to figure out what's important and what isn't.

After launching the online portal and the physical PSKs, PSP has brought the passport-related information on the mobile for smartphone users in 2013. Applicants can now access this information on their smartphones using Mobile App mPassportSeva. The App provides information on various steps involved to obtain a passport-related service and where to call in case of queries or concerns. The users are able to search for a Passport Seva Kendra (PSK). Citizens living overseas can find out relevant information about the-Indian Missions/Posts abroad. For certain states and districts, the users can search for police stations as well. Fee calculator feature of the application enables users to find out the required fee based on the service and mode of submission. The users can track status of their passport applications using file number and date of birth. For dispatched passports, the delivery status can also be tracked.

The PSP in 2014 accomplished the integration of 183 overseas Indian Missions/Posts abroad through available cloud technologies without compromising the security of data and information. The database would remain within government data center within India, however, some part of static contents, HTML pages etc. would be hosted on cloud ensuring performance and avoiding the network latency.

The Foundation

The three aspects-citizen proximity, process reengineering and digital infrastructure-represented only the tip of the iceberg as far as decoding the success is concerned. There was a lot more below the surface, which provided a strong foundation to the three aspects. There were five distinct aspects, which were identified as relevant to the success of the transformation initiative.

The first one is the systemic resourcefulness. Having been granted the status of a Mission Mode Project ensured that the initiative had political backing, funds allocated and a continuous monitoring at the highest levels. There were structural options available to operationalize the project, which was done using the Project Management Unit (PMU) route. The option ensured that technical and management skills can be hired at market rate. The trusted expertise, skills and experience of the-service partner TCS provided another set of resources.

Having resources and being able to leverage them are two distinct things. Often, the bold leadership makes all the difference between success and failure. *E.g.* there are options available to the Government functionaries to initiative course corrective changes in the project on which a private partner is working. Though it is available, very often it is not used. Due to bureaucratic hurdles, many choose to avoid taking risks. But without using such options, a big transformation is difficult to achieve. This type of leadership also empowers the employees and the partner within the confines of the bureaucratic rules and protocols.

The ability of TCS to define and suggest a **win-win model** for all stakeholders played a critical role. The investments in the IT infrastructure and the setting up of the PSKs were borne by TCS. It would recover the investments through a pay per use model during the contract period. At the end of the contract period of 6 years (extendable up to 2 years), TCS will profitably recover its investments

and for the Passport Services department it's an operational expense, at the end of which it would own the assets. The contract includes very clearly defined 27 parameters[20] to rate the TCS's service levels and be paid accordingly. The contract has ensured that finishing off the project on time and increasing the ability to scale up the transactions were in the interest of TCS. It, however, also requires the Passport Service leadership to ensure that the project is not stuck in internal issues of change. The internal PMU team and TCS worked as a one, cohesive team.

That's where an **organic change management approach**, which was based on the tenets of creating an environment of trust and collaboration, encouraging conversations to allay the fears of the existing staff and flexibility to accommodate unpredictable aspects of the change process. Without such an approach, operationalizing the three aspects of citizen proximity, process reengineering and digital infrastructure would have at best brought merely structural changes with limited impact.

The **ecosystem** of the external entities in which the initiative was embedded also deserves a special mention. The process of delivering a passport involves a close interaction with the police department, which falls under Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA). The process is automated only till the district SP's office, beyond which it's largely manual. Police verification part of the process consumes a great share of the total time taken for issuing the passport and any further improvements in it shall reduce the time taken. PSP management is working on creating a mobile-based solution for the police stations to expedite the process of verification through direct input online.

PSP management is also looking at linking their system with the Digital Locker scheme of the Government of India, which allows citizens to store a digital version of their documents (like birth certificate, marriage certificate,

20 The 27 parameters falls under 7 broad heads:

1. External Efficiency (6)
2. Internal Efficiency (2)
3. External Effectiveness (4)
4. Internal Effectiveness (4)
5. Technical effectiveness (3)
6. Environmental parameters (4)
7. Customer relations (4)

address proof etc.), many of which are also required for applying for the passport. The PSP management is confident of linking their system with the Digital Locker scheme as soon as it gains prominence. Many such boosts in the ecosystem shall help improve the passport service quality.

Efficient and Effective Citizen Services

The results so far clearly indicate that the efficiency and the effectiveness of the passport services to the citizens have seen a remarkable improvement. The PSP processed more than a Crore (10 million) applications for passport in 2014, which is 20% higher than 2013. There has also been a 31% increase in daily appointments in 2014, which crossed the figure of 50,000. Despite the increase in workload, the time taken for issuing a passport has come down in 2014. Around 80% of the passports were issued within 3 working days as compared to only 64% in 2013 (Source-*Passport Patrika,* July-December, 2014).

The time for issuing the passport does not include the police verification (PV) time, which is outside PSPs control. However, efforts are being made to reduce even that. There is an all rounded improvement in police verification process also. The average time of come down from 49 days in 2012 to 42 days in 2014. As on date the average police verification time is 30 days. Good news is that in 47% cases the verification gets done within 21 days. In 2012 this figure was just 26%. (Source-*Passport Patrika,* July-December, 2014). But, there's still a lot of room for improvement, especially when we see data by the states. Some states are really doing a great job but others need to catch up with the process.

The outreach programs like Passport Melas and Passport Seva Camps have seen a surge in 2014. In 2013, 36,167 applications were processed in 86 such melas, which has increased to 1,99,173 applications in 2014 from 384 melas. 61 Passport Seva Camps were organized in remote locations where 16,000 applications were received in 2014.

The PSP also leveraged on the vast network of over 1,00,000 Citizen Service Centers (CSCs) across the rural hinterland run by the Department of Electronics and Information Technology (Deity), Government of India. The CSCs facilitate filing and uploading of passport application form, online payment of applicable fee and scheduling of appointments for the visit to the PSK as nominal charge not exceeding Rs. 100 (<2 dollars). The service was

launched in pilot mode at 15 select CSC locations in March 2014. The full roll out across the country happened by April, 2014. Till December, 2014, a total of 36,613 passport registrations were done through CSC ecosystem across India (Source: *Passport Patrika,* July-December, 2014). This number is expected to grow phenomenally in the future.

Adoption of IT for delivering governance to the citizens is an endeavor of both developed and developing nations. The emergence of digital technologies like social media, mobility, analytics and cloud has provided further boost to this. However, a majority of citizen-centric e-governance initiatives fail to create the desired impact.

E-governance is a global issue; however it makes immense relevance for the developing nations. Given the need for a constructive role of the government in providing citizen services and building the infrastructure to spur growth and development, both information and digital technologies can play a decisive role. The role of ICT can range from efficiency and effectiveness of providing citizen services, enhancing transparency in government deals and reducing corruption. The case study on India Passport Services Transformation provides a holistic view of external and internal perspectives of changing the organization, its approach, and its working to put citizens at the center and aligning with their needs.

A holistic approach to E-governance projects is required today. In an age when IT and digital technologies are creating new ways to deliver citizen services and many initiatives are failing to make an impact, it becomes important to document and analyze success stories. The Indian Passport Services Transformation case study provides a well-rounded view of success of an e-governance project. Though each project will have its own reality, the learning obtained from the case study can be valuable in providing a broader direction.

21 JEWELS OF DIGITAL

In *21 Jewels of Digital* the authors, Kapil Dev Singh, Rahul Neel Mani, Sanjay Gupta, and Shipra Malhotra, showcase how some of the truly transformative Indian enterprises–spanning across the industry spectrum–have defied the myth of being averse to risk and have taken the required bold steps to join the global bandwagon. These stories collectively present a picture where one can say that Indian enterprises also possess the wherewithal of creating a fully digitally enabled business. It's about working on it with the right leadership, right technology, right culture and right mindset.

Based on a year-long research, the authors, with the help of a learned jury, reached to the conclusion that these twenty-one organizations deserve to be called as the true "Jewels of Digital."

21 Jewels of Digital should work as a guide for thousands of aspiring organizations, who want to thrive in the emerging global digital economy.

Price ₹1195
ISBN 978-93-5206-588-2
9 789352 065882

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