Case Study Series: Learning from Innovative Civil Servants

Case Title:
Leveraging Technology to Settle Scheduling Conflicts

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An Inefficient System of Scheduling Meetings

Problem

The process of meeting and informing people was cumbersome and inefficient, frequently resulting in scheduling conflicts

Solution

Introduction of a digital system that allowed everyone to be notified of any upcoming meeting and addressed the schedule conflict issue

Outcome

Ease in the process of scheduling and announcing meetings and keeping track (agenda, decisions, attendance, etc.) of past meetings

Every day, the government officials working under different ministries in Bangladesh need to attend plenty of meetings, seminars, and events. The ministry where our subject, Mr. X, works has two separate departments. Both departments schedule meetings involving many government officials, both from the ministry he works for and other ministries. But complications arise when both ministries call for a meeting simultaneously in the only conference room available. This would quite often lead to scheduling clashes, and officials would have to wait outside the conference room for the ongoing meeting to end.

To ensure that meeting timings do not clash, a planner has to contact a number of people to know if they have scheduled any meeting at a particular time – a time-consuming, cumbersome, and inefficient process. In addition, after scheduling a meeting, they would have to disseminate the meeting notice via three different mediums – email, the e-filing system, and printed copies to every office via office staff. With this manual system, there were increased chances of the meeting notice going missing or officials missing the notice altogether, inevitably leading to officials missing their meetings. Obviously, there was no way to validate their claims of the notices not reaching them in time and this contributed to an increase in certain officials slacking off where and when such opportunities arose.

Providing a Digital Solution to the Scheduling Conflict

In an attempt to solve this scheduling conflict, Mr. X thought of developing a digital application whereby he could see the meeting schedule for the whole ministry. He proposed this idea to the innovation team of his department and, eventually, it was approved after multiple screenings. Each official was then assigned a unique ID and password with which to log into the system and check the schedule before calling a meeting. As a result, there was no need to make numerous calls to know if any other meetings had been called on a particular day or time. The system did not allow duplicate entries, even if someone tried to do so. Now, they simply upload the notice of the meeting in the application, including the meeting agenda, name of attendees, and other relevant details.

Since one of the most prominent offices in Bangladesh had been suffering from this crippling problem, it can be easily assumed that this problem was widespread. If more offices adopted such a solution, life would be made easier for all stakeholders.

This online system is still a work in progress. Mr. X, with the help of others, is working to fix the prevailing issues and trying to come up with new features to increase efficiency. Mr. X is currently working on a process that would enable sending message alerts to employees, registering digital attendance, etc. Mr. X has introduced a new platform to tackle the problem, but the government already has different other digital platforms, for example, IBAS++ and e-Filing, which are facilitating the government's digitization drive. If Mr. X can utilize the existing platforms, that can contribute to increased efficiency and simplify things for the users.

About the Authors

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