

# FEATURES

1. A film star was once asked whether she had any bad habits. She replied, "My life is an open book. I don't smoke, I don't drink, have no boyfriends, no pre or extra marital affairs, but I have only one bad habit: I tell lies. Transparency in Public Administration is a prerequisite for effective governance. Keeping things 'confidential' and secret' in the domain of Public Administration is a colonial legacy, where victor would not trust the vanquish. It is said that vigilant citizenry is the best guarantee against any misgovernance and misadventures. Democracy has its own twists and turns and calls for a very high degree of vigil on the part of 'we the people'. The dictum is not for nothing that *vox populi is vox Dei* which means the voice of the people is the voice of the God.

1.1 We are in the thick of giant technological advancements. Technology is changing faster than we can keep pace with. Great strides have already been made in technological innovations and technical sophistication. Concepts like e-tendering, video-conferencing, 'Live' beaming of Olympics from one part of the globe to another would have simply sounded divine or crazy just half a century back.

1.2 The use of technology in ensuring transparency in Public Administration cannot be overstated. However, it is easier said than done. Foremost, it requires locating and liquidating the mental barriers against progressive usage of technology. It would also need procuring and adapting to the latest gadgets, keeping pace with the ever innovative Research and Development, maintenance of hardware and, above all, the ever so eluding 'will to act'. As 'Nike' would put it 'Just do it'. Let us dwell upon the nitty gritty of possible areas where the technology could be pressed into service of mankind in general and public servants in particular.

2. SOHO: stands for Small Office Home Office. Sitting at home, through one's PC one can access anything and everything as it would be wired with the mainframe computer, centrally located in the office. One can write notings, send and accord approvals, even apply for leave and advances and yes, the same could be sanctioned too by a click of the mouse. Welcome aboard to the world of techies. Till we get to the age of SOHO let us explore other equipment, appliances and their probable applications in our areas of interest.

3. Thumb impression entry/attendance & payroll: Like SOHO, this system too is very much in vogue. Through this method, an employee's attendance is marked, entry-exit regulated and the network is linked with payroll so as to compute employee's salary for the period he or she was actually in office.

4. SMS(Short Messaging Service): Communication was never so swift and wholesome as now, by way of SMS. Two-way communication is indeed a precursor to the effective governance. Look at the way it is being (mis)used by these so called Reality Show people on Television. Anything good, bad and ugly will be known in no time. Central Railway is already reaping benefits in the form of Passenger feedback. Possibilities of other applications of this system need to be explored.

5. Phone Help line: As of now, it is being used in a limited way. After dialing 139, one comes to know PNR inquiry, arrival, departure train information in advance. The system has immense potential. We can use it for various other information systems viz. selection information, grievance handling, settlement woes, leave & PF details, etc. So we may have 'Dial 149' for Personnel, Dial 159' for Stores related queries and so on.

6. Website: Each department needs to put all their

business decisions, processes, procedures, in short what they do on the website promptly. This helps people in general to know what are we up to.

7. E-mail: It has immense scope for expansion. We have to encourage greater transaction of e-mails in a real big way. The potential of e-mails has not hitherto been exploited due to peoples indifference and simply due to lack of machine/monitoring.

8. CCTV: is another potent tool. It is already making news while it helps detecting crimes by going through the footage e.g. bank heist, sleight of hand in jewellery stores, etc. We may explore possibilities of installing it at vulnerable location e.g. offices, corridors, platforms, busy FOB's Booking office area, Conference Room (POM/PNM) viva sessions, tender negotiations, D&AR enquiry and decoy checks (spy camera). The whole concept has to go well with the staff. It has to blend with their sensibilities. This should not be a difficult task with proper counseling/guidance and elucidating the lofty objectives.

9. Video Conferencing: We have to utilize this facility in a big way. Be it POM or Shop floor, Station Master of a far off station or Control tower in Divisional Hqrs, need is to rewire to and fro the stations, divisions and Headquarters. As it is said 'seeing is believing' so we have to get used to it and drive home the point to prospective users, convince them of its benefits and transparency in the dealing.

10. Online Test: Time has come to say goodbye to conventional methodology of tests (RRB and Departmental exams) RFID (Radio Frequency Imagery Detection) is just another aid. When CAT (Common Admission Test), viva for visa, MBA examination (IGNOU), TOEFL and GRE can be conducted 'on-line' with the help of internet w.w.w (world wide web) so can Railway Examinations in a reasonably foolproof way, in the process getting rid of large paperwork and related complications.

11. The Will & Wherewithal: The foremost requirement will be that of the 'will' to do it among the rank and file. Once we have 'will' of the people in place, we would need the necessary wherewithal to achieve and manage it all. Those involved have to have the burning desire to make it a success, make it work and sustain it. Lack of will can turn best of systems to look obsolete, superfluous and simply 'funny'.

12. Technology should essentially lead to comfort and convenience. These high-tech devices and appliances when engaged prudently in the area of Public Administration are bound to lead to effective governance. An efficient system inculcates the 'values' of a sufficiently responsive and sensitized administration which effortlessly would lead to greater transparency. Transparency in turn will lead to much needed accessibility, cutting across the red-tape and above all, to widespread knowledge. Needless to say, Knowledge is Power and would continue to remain so forever. Amen!

PS: Human acumen is unbelievable. They are capable of reducing even the next generation computer into a mere typewriter. You know what they did with washing machine in Punjab- it is used for churning 'Lassi'

Once a lady bought a dress. Her husband got wild and moaned "but it is transparent, I can see through it". She chided him. "you naughty! Once I wear it how can it be transparent, I bet you can't see through it". So dear! All systems per se are transparent 'open' its human presence which turns them translucent or opaque.

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**USE OF TECHNOLOGY  
TO INCREASE  
TRANSPARENCY  
IN GOVERNANCE.**