

Today, SNB is a trusted government partner; providing services for almost 15 years at an increasingly satisfactory level. Over the years this trust has helped SNB weather changing administrations. Each administration has recognized the value SNB brings to the province and as a consequence each administration has supported SNB. SNB has continued to earn this trust by providing over four million transactions annually and hundreds of different web-based services; by collecting millions of dollars on behalf of 16 departments and 59 municipalities; and by maintaining a 92% customer satisfaction rating. At the end of fiscal year 2004-05 SNB was providing about 270 services to citizens. These services are provided through three channels: online, over the phone, and over-the-counter. The balance of use of different channels has shifted throughout the last decade with Web use growing from 6% to 32%, and over-the-counter service delivery dropping from 86% to 60%.

Table 2. SNB Performance Statistics Fiscal Year 2004-05			
Category	FY 2003-04	FY 2004-05	Growth
Transactions by Delivery Channel			
Online	1.5 mln	1.9 mln	26.7%
TeleServices	0.3 mln	0.3 mln	
Over-the-Counter	2.6 mln	2.9 mln	11.5%
Total	4.5 mln	5.1 mln	13.3%
Online Products/Services			
Forms	292	352	20.5%
Service packages	17	19	11.8%
Services	89	152	70.8%
Products/publications	21	24	14.2%
Total	419	547	30.5%

Like any dynamic organization on a growth path, SNB wrestles with the management of its growing portfolio of services. The give and take between the goal of continuous improvement and growth and the commitment to customer satisfaction is tractable and challenging. Maintaining a balance requires SNB to both continue to invest in the best strategies of its past and to create new strategies for its future. For example, its unique approach to training continues to be a success factor for SNB. General and specialized training continues to be provided regularly to both service representatives and management, new and tenured. For service representatives SNB often organizes train-the-trainers program so that within a two-week period they could train all the service representatives throughout the province on a new services or feature.

To ensure their ongoing success SNB is reinforcing capability in a variety of areas as well as building capability in new areas. Through ongoing refinement of the project selection process, the case for consolidated services and the management of customer expectations SNB is building on its strengths. By creating new capability in managing intellectual property and leveraging its resources for economic development SNB is preparing itself to deal with new challenges. Each of these aspects of SNB is discussed below as a way to further highlight the unique characteristics of SNB in terms of its ability to balance public service and good business.

Refining the Project Planning and Selection Process

With the expansion of more projects on behalf of partners beyond NB, business analysis and selection processes have become more formal. This year for example, SNB will release new pricing policies and pricing guidelines and has created a more explicit business analysis process. A number of factors contributed to the necessity of this formalization. First among them is the disappearance of "low hanging fruit". The new business opportunities and service expansions are more tractable and complex; carrying greater costs and risks. More effort is necessary to identify and select from among those projects that provide public value and are good business and those that provide public value but are not sustainable. SNB now requires business cases to be more explicit and

formalized using standardized techniques and tools.

The Case for Consolidated Service Offerings

The days of low hanging fruit and easy wins are over. The straightforward business transactions have been automated leaving the more complex services being delivered in traditional ways and more so recently agencies are beginning to wonder if they could create their own “SNB like” service window. Each of these issues alone presents a challenge, but taken together they require a new threshold of business analysis.

Thierault characterizes the contrast between SNB projects at the launch and today; “when we talked about putting the first hundred forms or 200 forms online, those are the simple things. A new service usually starts with a simple licensing or registry program. Then you get into more complex things where you have to have a pretty comprehensive business case. The more complex services often require substantive knowledge or specialists in that type of business. SNB has reached a saturation point in automating simple and high volume processes, and low volume processes are more difficult to justify in terms of costs, so alternative strategies are required.”

Resistance among departments to transfer the delivery of services to SNB is attributable to a number of factors. First, for departments it means losing the power of being a service provider. Second, the departments lose direct contact with their clients, the citizens, when the services are delivered by SNB. Thus, a department’s understanding of the needs of citizens usually captured during day-to-day contact is removed. The business case for moving a service to SNB; whether involving a complex service or to overcome resistance must satisfy both the agency or agencies themselves that the service will be delivered more effectively or efficiently by SNB without a notable loss of power, and to satisfy SNB that it can be done consistent and sustainable way.

Responding to Changing Expectations

As citizens become more “web-savvy”, their expectations are changing. They have greater expectations for fully seamless and completely anonymous service options which secure their information and protect their privacy. These changes put pressure on SNB to understand and respond appropriately. SNB has in place mechanisms to maintain contact with the citizenry through its SQS methods. In general, these methods have allowed SNB to focus on general services and features. However, these same methods are being employed to collect perspectives about the more complex issues such as security and privacy. SNB is then able to reflect these needs back through existing systems and forward into new systems through appropriate policy, management, and technology strategies. Understanding the cost of those responses and integrating them into both current service agreements and future agreements is also done to ensure that the balance of value and sustainability continues.

Managing Intellectual Property Rights

SNB has become increasingly aware of the need to manage its intellectual property. In the early days, anyone who asked about the business model and technology strategies employed at SNB was given that information. As the success of the SNB model becomes more well known, the value to the province of New Brunswick of this model becomes more tangible. Competition for economic opportunities has become more intense and SNB has become more attune to the value of their assets in terms of these competitions. They are less willing, reasonably so, to share freely the very things that give them this economic development edge. The open door policy of the early days, which served SNB well, has been revisited. Requests for visits to SNB, by government and non-governmental delegations are considered differently now than in the “early days.” Sales of software tools and applications have become a new market for SNB and recognition of the market value of these products has changed the nature of many conversations at SNB. Managing intellectual property rights, like tracking and publicizing citizen satisfaction, appears to be good business for SNB.

Leverage SNB as an Economic Development Engine

The development of gBiz as a product and the signing of a licensing agreement with CGI has created new economic development opportunities for SNB and placed it firmly in a new and broader role in creating public value for the province. gBiz is an extension of the e-government model originally pioneered by SNB and developed in part by CGI. According to Georgette Roy, chair of the Board of Directors of SNB, “SNB together with CGI has leveraged gBiz into both an award-winning services platform and an economic development engine.”

The gBiz framework as described by CGI, provides service catalogs, payment facilities, and methods for reaching back into legacy mainframes allowing for the development of repeatable solutions resulting in reductions in cost and development time. gBiz is built on Microsoft products and uses a range of open standards technology. The primary example of the leverage provided by this product and the SNB-CGI relationship is the use of gBiz in the development of “joined up services” in Suffolk County in the United Kingdom. The County was faced with a short time-frame for the required delivery of services and looked to the gBiz framework as the strategy of choice. In December of 2004, SNB received a major software licensing royalty check for the sale by CGI of the gBiz framework to the County of Suffolk. A second example of the economic development impact is the siting of the CGI Global E-Government Headquarters in Fredericton, NB. In 2001, CGI established its “g-commerce lab” in Fredericton. This move was seen as a first step in new opportunities for growth in the Atlantic region.
