M-GOVERNANCE: THE MASSIVE REACH OF MOBILE PHONES IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

M-governance is a sub-domain of e-governance. It ensures that electronic services are available to people via mobile technologies using devices such as mobile phones. These services bypass the need for traditional physical networks for communications and collaboration. Mobile services are also cheaper as well as accessible in most of the rural areas in India. Increasing the mobile phone accessibility, adaptability and with the millions of subscription base, governments are promoting and using the mobile phone in delivery the e-Governance services. In the last few years, governments have seen mobile phones can empower citizens and affect the way citizens interact with each other and with society at large. Mobile phones are also considered to be an effective tool in strengthening democracy through better citizen-government interaction, thus influencing the political decision making process and making governments accountable for their activities. This paper attempts to identify the concept, mobile apps, current affairs and the challenges in m- governance in India.

KEY WORDS: M-Governance, E- Governance, Citizen, Mobile Apps and Portals

I. INTRODUCTION:

Government of India aims to utilize the massive reach of mobile phones and harness the potential of mobile applications to enable easy and round-the-clock access to public services, especially in the rural areas and to create unique infrastructure as well as application development ecosystem for m-Governance in the country.The Government of India is implementing the "Digital India" programme with a vision to transform India into a digitally empowered society and a knowledge economy. Under the Digital India programme, e-Kranti envisages provisioning of various e-Governance services in the country. The focus of the e- Kranti programme is to transform the e-Governance services by expanding the portfolio of Mission Mode Projects (MMPs) in e-Governance under various Government Departments, undertaking Government Process Reengineering (GPR), work flow automation, introducing latest technologies such as Cloud and mobile platform and focus on integration of services. The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology developed and notified the framework for Mobile Governance in February, 2012. The m - Governance framework of Government of India aims to utilize the massive reach of mobile phones and

harness the potential of mobile applications to enable easy and round - the - clock access to public services, especially in the rural areas. The framework aims to create unique infrastructure as well as application development ecosystem for m - Governance in the country. Following are the main measures laid down by MEIT:

❖ Web sites of all Government Departments and Agencies shall be made mobile-compliant, using the "One Web" approach.

❖ Open standards shall be adopted for mobile applications for ensuring the inter-operability of applications across various operating systems and devices as per the Government Policy on Open Standards for e-Governance.

❖ Uniform/ single pre-designated numbers (long and short codes) shall be used for mobile-based services to ensure convenience.

❖ All Government Departments and Agencies shall develop and deploy mobile applications for providing all their public services through mobile devices to the extent feasible on the mobile platform. They shall also specify the service levels for such services.

❖ To ensure adoption and implementation of the framework in time bound manner the government developed the Mobile Service Delivery Gateway (MSDG) that is the core infrastructure for enabling the availability of public services in through mobile devices.

II. OBJECTIVES

1. To understand the concept of M- Governance.

2. To list the Mobile Apps that enables the availability of public services.

3. To discuss the current affairs of E- Governance through M- Governance.

4. To identify the challenges faced by the Indian government in M- Governance.

III. BENEFITS OF M- GOVERNANCE

- Cost Saving
- Proficiency
- Transformation/modernization of public sector organizations
- Added convenience and flexibility
- Better services to the citizens
- Easy interaction

IV. MOBILE APPS FOR CITIZENS FEEDBACK

1. Mera Aspataal / My Hospital
2. Meri Sadak
3. RAS Mobile app
4. Swachh App

1. Mera Aspataal / My Hospital

It is an ICT based Patient Satisfaction System (PSS) for implementation in public and empanelled private hospitals. It is envisaged to empower the patient by seeking his / her views on quality of experience in a public healthcare facility. A multi-channel approach will be used to collect patients' feedback i.e. web portal, mobile application, Short Message Service (SMS), Interactive Voice Response System (IVRS).

2. Meri Sadak

"Meri Sadak" is a versatile mobile application to empower citizens to give their critical feedback with respect to the pace of work, nature of work and Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) streets to Nodal Departments in the State Governments/National Rural Roads Development Agency (NRRDA). Citizens can take photos of the site and submit along with feedback.On accommodation of the feedback, the citizen can screen the redressal of his/her input through this application. The particular State Quality Coordinators (SQCs) of the Nodal Department executing PMGSY will respond to the citizen within defined timelines.

3. RAS Mobile app

Rapid Assessment System (RAS) is an initiative of Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology to encourage citizen engagement in governance. It enables Government departments and agencies to capture citizens' feedback related to e-Governance services. RAS provides a mechanism for generation and management of feedbacks related to e-Gov services offered to and availed by users/ citizens across the country. Also, it facilitates analysing the feedbacks and generating knowledge out of them which in turn, helps in improving the users/ citizens experience in availing public services.

4. Swachh App

The app provides realtime sanitation coverage in rural areas at your finger tips. It enables citizens to do the following.

1. Rate one's village on Swachhta.
2. View the number of household toilets constructed for beneficiaries under Swachh Bharat Mission – Gramin.
3. View realtime sanitation coverage in percentage.

4. View number of Open defecation free villages.

V. CURRENT AFFAIRS ON M-GOVERNANCE IN INDIA

❖ The Central Board of Excise and Customs (CBEC) has launched a mobile application for Goods and Services Tax (GST) to inform the taxpayers of the latest updates on GST. The app has been launched inline Union Government's flagship Digital India initiative. It enables taxpayers to be well informed of the latest updates on GST. The app host of GST information such as Draft Law-Model GST Law, IGST Law and GST Compensation Law Migration to GST-Approach and guidelines for migration Draft Rules-Rules related to Registration, Payment, Returns, Refund and Invoice. FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions) on GST Various resources on GST such a articles, videos etc. Helpdesk/Email Contact About Central Board of Excise and Custom (CBEC) CBEC is the nodal government agency on Indirect Taxes responsible for administering Customs, Central Excise, Service Tax and Narcotics in India. Currently it operates and functions under the aegis of the Department of Revenue of Union Ministry of Finance. It was established in 1855 by the then British Governor General of India as Customs & Central Excise department. Thus, it is one of the oldest government departments of India.

❖ Government launches TAMRA Portal and Mobile App. The Ministry of Mines has launched Transparency, Auction Monitoring and Resource Augmentation (TAMRA) Portal and Mobile Application to ensure transparent award of statutory Clearances for mining operations The TAMRA platform was simultaneously launched across 12 mineral rich states as a part of the Ease of Doing Business in the Mining sector and to double mining contribution to GDP.

   Key Features: The TAMRA covers block-wise, state-wise and mineral-wise information of mines to be auctioned. It monitors various statutory clearances and also highlights the additional resources generated through e-auction. It is an interactive platform to speed up mining activity by facilitating all the stakeholders to track the status of the statutory clearances associated with mining blocks. In case of delay in obtaining any statutory clearances, TAMRA platform will send triggers to the concerned authority so that they can take remedial steps immediately. The Union Ministry of Mines will also receive triggers generated by TAMRA, facilitating it in expediting clearances. Further, the status of each of the clearances will be reflected on the portal. The portal also enables successful bidder to give suggestions and inputs. It will help to establish a participative and informative network among all stakeholders.

❖ Union Commerce Ministry launches SEZ India app. The Union Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MOCI) has launched a mobile application named "SEZ India" under its broader e-Governance

initiative to help the Special Economic Zone (SEZ) Units and Developers. It will help the SEZ Units and Developers to find information easily and track their transactions on Online System. It will also facilitate them to file all their transactions digitally through SEZ Online system and track the status on the go through the SEZ India mobile app. The app has four sections SEZ Information: It consists of compendium of the SEZ Act, 2005, MOCI Circulars, SEZ Rules, 2006, details of SEZs and Units etc. and gives up to date comprehensive details on all these aspects. Trade Information: It gives access to important information and tools such as Foreign Trade Policy (FTP), Hand Book of procedure, Customs & Excise Notification, Duty Calculator and MEIS Rates. Contact Details: It consists of contact details of all Development Commissioners Office, DG System, DGFT, DGCI & S and SEZ online. SEZ online Transaction: It dynamic submenu that tracks the Bill of Shipping/Entry Bill processing status and also does verification. It also helps the Exporters/Importers to track status of Shipping Bill/ Bill of Entry integration and processing in the EDI system of the ICEGATE.

❖ **Ministry of External Affairs launches Twitter Seva.** The Union Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) has launched Twitter Seva to directly engage with citizens in country and abroad, tourists and business travellers for speedy resolution of their visa and passport queries. Twitter Seva will enable the MEA, through its Twitter handle (@MEAIndia) to strengthen its primary relationship with Indian citizens by providing fast, efficient and real-time public services.

Key facts: The Twitter Seva service will be supported by 198 Twitter accounts of Missions and High Commissions across the world and 29 Regional Passport Offices (RPOs) in India. Both Indians and non-Indians register their relevant query simply with their tweet with MEA Twitter account. The request will activate the concerned office nationally or across the world and address a various range of issues under the MEA. The global roll-out of Twitter Seva will enable timely, transparent and large scale response to citizen Tweets in real-time. It will enhance scalability and expedite the process dealing with requests by Indian and global citizens.

❖ **Union Government launches Smart Consumer mobile App & OCMC for speedy redressal of consumer grievances.** The Union Government has launched 'Smart Consumer' mobile App and an 'Online Consumer Mediation Centre (OCMC)' to provide speedy redressal of consumer grievances. Apart from this, a helpline 14404 was also launched for consumer related grievances on the occasion of National Consumer Day (24th December).

Key facts: The OCMC has been launched in association with Bengaluru based National Law School of India University (NLSIU) to provide speedy redressal of consumer grievances in New Delhi. The basic purpose of this Centre is to encourage consumers and companies to go for pre-

litigation and provide them with an option to settle disputes amicably. Initially, the OCMC deal with only deal with cases related to e-commerce companies. It will also facilitate online and even physical mediation between consumers and companies. Besides, microsite based on the theme "Digitally Safe Consumer Campaign" was also launched. It will help consumers for being vigilant and not falling prey to cyber frauds.

❖ Union Government launches Coal Mitra portal to facilitate flexibility in utilization of domestic coal. The Union Ministry of Coal has launched Coal Mitra, a web portal for allowing flexibility in utilization of domestic Coal. It was launched by Union Minister of State (IC) for Power, Coal, New & Renewable Energy and Mines Piyush Goyal in New Delhi.

Key Facts: The Coal Mitra Web Portal aims at optimum utilisation by private as well as public power companies of the coal. It facilitates transfer of the coal reserves to more cost efficient State/Centre owned or Private sector generating stations. The portal allows coal swapping between PSUs and the Private Sector in transparent manner and also helps to reduce operational and logistic costs, bringing power tariffs down for the consumers. It facilitates state/Central Gencos to display information about normative fixed and variable charges of electricity for the previous month. They can also display margin available for additional generation so as to enable the utilities identify stations for transfer of coal. It will host data on Quantity and source of supply coal to the power plant, Operational and Financial parameters of each coal based station and Distance of Power plant form the Coal mine.

❖ Union Power Ministry to launch GARV-II Mobile App to monitor rural electrification programme. The Union Power Ministry is going to launch new mobile application GARV-II to provide real time data of all six lakh villages of the country. The purpose of the mobile application is to ensure transparency in implementation of rural electrification programme.

Key Facts: GARV-II mobile app has incorporated village-wise; habitation-wise base line data on household electrification for all states. It also has mapped village-wise works sanctioned under Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Gram Jyoti Yojana (DDUGJY) to monitor progress of works in each village. It also incorporates the status of release of funds to the states for electrification projects sanctioned under DDUGJY. GARV-II allows peoples participation for rural electrification work. It opens rural electrification work to public scrutiny and input about rural electrification programme It also has a citizen engagement window 'SAMVAD' to enhance participation. It automatically forwards feedback and suggestions of people to the concerned authorities through SMS & Email. It aims to ensure electricity access to all households as government has already electrified over 11,000 villages out of 18,452 un-electrified villages.

❖ Telecom Ministry to launch Tarang Sanchar portal check radiation compliance of mobile towers. The Department of Telecom (DoT) will soon launch 'Tarang Sanchar' portal that will let users check radiation compliance status of mobile towers and transmitters across country. Using this portal user can also request to get a particular BTS tested by DoT to assess its electro-magnetic frequency (EMF) compliance level.

  Key Facts: The portal has data from 12.5 lakh base transceiver stations (BTS). It will enable users to view tower-specific details such as the operator, the supporting technology (2G/3G/4G). It will also help user to check with mobile tower meets electro-magnetic frequency (EMF) by putting in a specific request to DoT. DoT will test mobile towers for free if the prescribed ceiling in a particular service area for testing of BTS has already been reached. It may also charge user fee of Rs. 5000 to get the radiation level checked of mobile towers in case the tests are not undertaken earlier.

❖ Indian Army launches Veterans Outreach App to reach out to veterans. The Indian Army has launched a "Veterans Outreach App" in a bid to reach out to its ex-servicemen. The app was launched by the Chief of the Army Staff (COAS) General Dalbir Singh Suhag. It is dedicated to Army Veterans and Veer Naris.

  Key Facts: The app was designed by the Directorate of Indian Army Veterans (DIAV), which also runs a web portal specifically meant for veterans and Veer Naris It has specific features like "Ask a question" and "Locator Services" for locating Ex-Serviceman Cells, ECHS Polyclinics, Station Canteens and Sainik Aram Garhs all across the country. The app also facilitates route guidance on a google map to any chosen service facility. To enable veteran to check their pension entitlements, the app provides link to a "Pension Calculator" on the PCDA (P) web site called 'Suvigyai'. It also facilitates "Findings Coursemates" from amongst veterans who are registered on the Indian Army Veterans Portal.

❖ Andhra Pradesh Government launches AP Purse mobile app to promote digital transactions Andhra Pradesh Government has launched AP Purse mobile application to promote digital transactions among the people. It was launched by Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu in Vijayawada to solve the cash crunch problem in the state following demonitisaton of high value old currency notes.

  Key Facts The application features 13 mobile banking and 10 mobile wallet options. Using this application people can pay their bills and carry out their cashless transactions. Besides, Government will rope agents named 'Marpu Nestam' to improve digital financial literacy among people. They will be provided with incentives. Engineering students will be encouraged to train people in mobile banking transactions using several wallets. This would help the students to earn while learn. State government introduced cashless transactions at fair price shops and completed

70% of transactions using Aadhaar linkage to provide relief to people suffering from shortage of small currency.

❖ Government launches e-Pashuhaat portal to connect farmers and breeders of bovine animals. The Union Agriculture & Farmers Welfare launched e-pashuhaat portal to connect farmers and breeders of bovine animals. The portal will act as a single online e-trading market platform, including availability of bovine germplasm. It will enable the farmers to buy bovine animals, frozen semen and embryo.

   Key Facts: e-pashuhaat portal will connect farmers with breeders- State, Central, Co-operative, Milk Federations, and private agencies. It will provide information related to certification of the animal, breeding, its picture, volume of milk given by the cow etc. It will facilitate farmers to purchase advanced breed of bovine animals at a reasonable price as per as their requirements. It will provide, certified picture of animals, its parents information, breeding, volume of milk given by bovine animal information. Besides, it will provide information related to animal fodder varieties, its volume and price. It will have real time authentic certified information on availability of germplasm. Significance Earlier there was no single authentic organised market for animals. Information like pet cattle, trading of bovine animals was not available in any other forum or platform in the country. This portal is likely to help fill in the vacuum. Since dairying activity is a major supplementary source of income for farmers. The portal will play important role in increasing income of framers from animal rearing for achieving the goal of doubling farmers' income by 2022. It establishes links between 'farmer to farmer' and 'farmer to institutes'. Thus, it minimises the involvement of middlemen. It will create a comparative Farm Network that will facilitate farmers to exchange local knowledge and resources. India has the largest bovine population in the world. It accounts for 14% of world cattle population, while share for buffalo alone is 53% of which 79% of the cattle are indigenous and 21% are crossbred and exotic varieties. The Indigenous bovine breeds are sturdy and are endowed with quality of heat tolerance, resistance to diseases. They have ability to thrive under extreme climatic conditions and survive with low inputs. However, most of the indigenous are suited for draught animal power as they have low genetic potential for milk production. Rashtriya Gokul Mission' launched in December 2014 aims at addressing this issue.

❖ Union Government launches Air Sewa website and app to track flights, register complaints. The Union Ministry of Civil Aviation launched Air Sewa website and app to track flights, register complaints to offer people a convenient and hassle-free air travel experience. Both include a mechanism for grievance redressal, back-office operations for grievance handling, flight status and airport information.

Key facts: Passengers can register their grievances through this new service by uploading voice or video along with an elaborate description about their grievances. On reporting grievances passengers will be given a unique reference number for each of their reported grievances via an email and SMS. The users can track the status and response to these grievances through the web portal as well as mobile app based on the reference number provided. Once the grievance is closed the user has an option to provide his feedback and rate the overall experience and satisfaction. Each shared grievance will be directed to the responsible nodal agency for resolution based on the category chosen by the complainant. Each grievance have a resolution timeline defined for initial response as well as final resolution and the nodal officer will communicate via an email and SMS. Besides, user can check the flight status and schedule between any airports on the basis of flight number or for all flights to a particular airport. Airport information will be also displayed which will include basic details like weather, contact information of airport services like transport/parking, rest and relax, Wi Fi service.

❖ Delhi Police launches Mobile App for senior citizens. The Delhi Police has launched a mobile application "Delhi Police Senior Citizen" for senior citizens to provide immediate assistance to them in distress. The facility was launched by Delhi Lieutenant Governor Najeeb Jung at a function in New Delhi on the occasion of International Day of Older Persons (observed on October 1).

Key Features: The application has an SOS button integrated with a dedicated existing helpline for Senior Citizen – 1291. The app has been designed with features that allow users to press the SOS button in case of an emergency. The call will reach a dedicated station. If the user is unwell, an ambulance will be sent. In case for any other reason, a beat constable will be asked to contact the user. In case, the user does not respond to operator's calls, a beat constable will swiftly visit the house to verify the reason of distress.

❖ MEA launches mobile App integrating various social media handles The Union Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) has launched a mobile app that integrates various social media handles of over 170 Indian missions on a common platform. The application will help to further expand digital presence of MEA and serve as a common platform to further its public outreach.

Key Facts: The application has been developed by social media giant Face book for free. It will help people connect with Indian missions abroad and the MEA through a range of social media platforms without having to access individual websites. The MEA uses Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Gplus, Youtube, Soundcloud, Flickr to reach out to people as part of its social media engagement. People through the app can just tap on the map of the country to get access to all social

media platforms of the mission rather than searching for websites, Facebook pages and twitter handle of individual missions.

❖ Union Government launches data bank portal of MSMEs. The Union Government has launched two important initiatives of the Union Ministry of MSME, viz. MSME Databank Portal and Online Finance Facilitation Web Portal. They were launched by Union Minister of Finance & Corporate Affairs Arun Jaitley on the sidelines of 14th Meeting of the National Board of MSME in New Delhi.

Key Facts: MSME Databank Portal: It aims to gather information about micro, small and medium enterprise (MSMEs). Its Objective is to have one-stop source of information of MSMEs of India, including their credit and technology, requirement in terms of raw material and marketing, etc. It will enable the MSME units and the various Associations to furnish data online. It will save the efforts and money required for physical Census. Databank's MIS dashboard will provide real time information on various types of the MSMEs registered on the portal. The databank will be used for public procurement purposes and the PSUs will make use of the data for procuring from MSMEs. Online Finance Facilitation Web Portal: It will provide collective funding options for MSMEs. The portal will allow the MSMEs to apply for loans from the various banks on the NSIC (National Small Industries Corporation) portal itself.

❖ Union Commerce Ministry launches e-marketplace portal for goods procurement. The Union Commerce Ministry has launched an e-marketplace portal for online purchase of goods and services by various central government ministries and departments. It was launched by the Union Minister of State (MoS) Commerce and Industry Nirmala Sitharaman in New Delhi.

Key Facts: The e-marketplace portal has been developed by the Directorate General of Supplies and Disposals (DGS&D). The e-marketplace portal aims at bringing in more transparency and streamlining the government procurement of goods and services. Using this, portal all the government departments and ministries can procure goods and services. It will help to aggregate demand which will lead to lower prices, better choices and faster procurement. Directorate General of Supplies and Disposals (DGS&D): It is department under the Union Commerce Ministry and carries out the government procurement.

❖ Union HRD Ministry launches Prashikshak, an online teacher education portal. The Union Human Resource Development (HRD) Ministry has launched 'Prashikshak'- an online teacher education portal for District Institutes of Education and Training (DIETs). The Prashikshak portal was launched by the Union HRD minister Smriti Irani in New Delhi. It seeks to strengthen DIETs and bring quality teachers into the school education system.

Key Facts: The portal has been developed by the Union HRD ministry in collaboration with the Central Square Foundation, a policy think tank focused on improving quality of school education. It is an open online platform for collecting and reporting data from all DIETs which will help in the establishment of a strong monitoring mechanism. Prashikshak users will comprise pre-service teacher educators, DIET faculty and principals, policy makers at district, state and national level and the general public. The portal will strengthen the teacher education system in four ways (i) It will equip government officials with data for decision making, (ii) empower aspiring teachers (iii) Support innovation in teachers' education and (iv) Increase transparency. It will help DIETs to make informed decisions about their institutes and compare the performance of their institute against other DIETs by facilitating online reporting of data. It will provide insightful analysis to strengthen the teacher education scheme in the country and allow states to spot areas where resources can be targeted. District Institutes of Education and Training (DIETs) DIETs were formed under the Centrally Sponsored Scheme on Teacher Education (CSSTE). They offer pre-service and in-service teacher training programmes for Government elementary school teachers.

❖ Union Railway Ministry launches Nivaran portal, an online grievance redressal system. The Union Railway Ministry has launched Nivaran portal, an online system for redressal of service related grievance of serving and former Railway employees. It was launched by Union Railway Minister Suresh Prabhu at function held in Rail Bhawan, New Delhi.

Key Facts: Nivaran portal is an online system that seeks to facilitate the employees to lodge their grievances and also monitor the progress. The system will also provide employees of Indian Railways facility for lodging appeal to the higher authority in case the decision is not found satisfactory. Highest controlling authorities will also be able to monitor the progress of grievance redressal by field offices through this system. It has been developed by CRIS (Centre for Railway information systems), an IT arm of Indian Railways on basis of process designed by Establishment directorate of Railway Board. This online system for redressal of service related grievance will help to achieve Union Railway Ministry's emphasis on the importance of its manpower. Indian Railways is the single biggest civilian employer in the country and has workforce of over 1.3 million people.

VI. **Challenges in e-Governance in India**

In a country with the diversity and size as India's, there are bound to be several challenges, least of which are technical.

➢ *Interaction and integration:* The success of any e-Governance initiative lies in complete integration between the services. That is easier said than done. We are a country with 18 official languages and states having different parties in power than at the Center. This creates language issues and also

political issues. Even though NIC is the one body responsible for the whole framework, but there is no ready-made framework out there that can be used by NIC to easily dove-tail different components together. Whatever it does in a way, becomes the standard.

➢ *Technical divide:* Even though awareness has grown over the last decade. Still, the Urban-Rural divide is quite huge in terms of technical capabilities and accessibility. Internet access is not that readily available in villages and small towns. So the political motivation to spend time and resources on something that will provide benefits to the people of the state is sometimes absent. It takes a back seat. This is accentuated by the lack of education and awareness of the politicians themselves.

➢ *Infrastructure and Speed***:** Even in the urban areas, the speeds of Government websites and its user friendliness is suspect. People would like to use the resources available, but it can all go waste if the websites are badly designed (which many are) and do not open up fast enough. NIC's own portal is a rather well done website though.

➢ *Security and technical changes***:** technology is changing at such a fast pace while the government speed is rather slow. Both don't work well. Within a matter of months these days, the entire technologies change – old ones become obsolete and new ones become standards. In such a scenario, we need to be nimble in the government. Add to this the high need for top class security. With so many hackers out there with newer and newer ways to get in, it is important that the government takes full care of the latest advances. There have been many instances of hackers defacing the government websites time and again. This makes using internet and e-governance a big challenge.

➢ *Process and administrative inertia***:** At the core of it, e-Governance is not a "technical initiative". It hinges on the re-engineering of process and administrative methods. If one has to enable technology to do things better and faster, then people and processes need to change the ways. That is most often not possible in a government set up. The personnel in government have little or no motivation to change the way they have been doing things. That can fail any well laid out processes and technologies!

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