In just a few short years, the Internet has gone from a high tech wonder to something people simply take for granted. I remember a few years ago when I was happily surprised to find companies that had web sites. Now, I am shocked when they don't. People have come to expect that businesses will have an Internet presence and offer goods and services online.

People expect no less of their government. A recent survey by the Pew Internet and American Life Project found that 48 percent of people had used the Internet to find information about government. That's three times the number of people who used the Internet to look up weather information and twelve times the number of people who used it to shop. That's an astounding result that shows that people expect to access their government online. Furthermore, people expect the same level of security, privacy, speed, service and reliability they have come to experience with other online services.

In keeping with that expectation, I recently challenged the directors of state departments to make Utah a state where government services are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. But being a 24/7 state goes beyond merely being always on—it commits us to changing the way people interact with government.

When many people look at the Internet, they see a convenient way to automate business processes. That's a good start, but we can do better: we can use the Internet to transform how government works. How can the Internet transform government? By changing the very processes themselves and the way that people interact with them.

Here's an example: Imagine a couple—John and Mary—starting a family business. They know that there are a lot of requirements that
government places on them to start a business. The problem is that they do not know what these requirements are, let alone have time to meet all of them. One evening after discussing their plans around the dinner table, John and Mary go to their computer and visit the www.utah.gov web site. There they select a life event consistent with their situation, “Starting a Business,” and fill out a series of easy to understand screens that gather all the information necessary to satisfy government’s demands associated with starting a business in Utah.

After going through this simple process, the information that John and Mary entered is used to register them with the Department of Commerce, notify the Tax Commission that they need a sales tax number, sign them up for a business license with their city, set up their unemployment insurance account at the Department of Workforce Services and apprise them of any licensing requirements. Because of the design of the www.utah.gov portal, Mary and John are able to complete this transaction in a secure environment choosing from a variety of payment methods. In a few minutes at home, they have taken care of tasks that would have taken days of driving from place to place, filling out the same information on numerous forms. This is a completely new way of interacting with government. They interact with government “online, not in line,” 24 hours a day, seven days a week from the convenience of their homes.

One of the things I like about this example is that it extends beyond state government to include services offered by local government and even the federal government. One day these services may extend to include private services such as banks or real estate. At the end of the day, John and Mary do not really care that they are interacting with numerous government entities or even the private sector; they just care about getting their work done as quickly as they can.

The goal of Utah state government is to efficiently service customers by breaking down artificial walls and barriers between agencies and departments. One of the most exciting things about eGovernment is that it brings government services and information to the surface where people like John and Mary can easily find what they need. Along the way, it forces the business processes that drive government to be reexamined and streamlined.

**Utah’s eGovernment Service Portal**

Utah’s government service portal at www.utah.gov offers a variety of services for both individual citizens and businesses. One of the more popular services is Renewal Express. This highly intuitive service walks