



JRI news release

e-Community Strategy to realize regional promotion

e-Community, which uses IT, to invigorate the region

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The Japan Research Institute, Limited

Center for the Strategy of Emergence

For enquires related to this report, please contact below:

Senior Chief Researcher, Center for the Strategy of Emergence

Shigeru Takamura (Tel: 03-3288-4187 E-mail: takamura@ird.jri.co.jp)

[Outline]

It is not sufficient that use of IT is promoted only in municipality offices, on the other hand, it is necessary to construct a framework for the use of IT by residents and local companies in order to realize 'the electronic government / the electronic municipalities' raised in the e-Japan 2002 program promoted by Prime Minister Koizumi.

This report explains the activity of the 'Saitama e-Community Project Study Group' that studied local business groups cooperation with local municipalities in Saitama Prefecture, regarding the thinking process, project model etc., and then suggests how it could be applied to the cities of Kyoto, Osaka and Kobe.

1 . Issues engaging local communities

1. Regional industry is declining because of the structural recession and the domestic hollowing out.
2. Due to depopulation regional cities are declining to the extent that the town centers are referred to as 'Shutter Avenue'. On the other hand, around the big cities while luxurious goods are being bought in the city area, there is a strong trend for daily necessities to be purchased by driving out on holidays to shopping centers or large drug stores etc. so that there is a decline in the town centers also.
3. Intra-local communication also shows a declining trend due to reasons such as population reduction, interaction breakdown between old and new residents etc.
4. Regarding administration, there is a concern that due to major revenue shortages the level of administration services may fall.

2 . Explanation of e-Community concept

1. The concept of e-Community is that the local municipality and neutral prominent local business groups cooperate to prepare the infrastructure for IT usage by the region's residents and shops etc.
2. It is felt that as a first infrastructure, preparation of a 'regional portal site' would be useful. However, for the actual preparation, collation of contents and system preparation is required. So, it is necessary to realize cooperation with a global company that has contents and solutions product.
3. This regional portal site is not simply a convenient site to obtain information; by accumulating the experiences of the residents it aims at creating new actions in the local community (concept: click & action).
4. In the near future, it is hoped to offer 'regional service points' that can be used wherever in the region. It might be also kept in mind to link the service with card projects developed for the region.

3 . Merits of e-Community

1. e-Community is a tool that considers the special characteristics of the region to substantiate regional contents and is linked to the activity of electronic municipality. Thus, it can become a unit to realize e-Japan.
2. Through e-Community, the style of Web sites 'announcing public information' that has been developed by local municipalities until now can be changed to 'support livelihood' sites by cooperation between government and the people. Thus, private information, which could not be provided by municipality Web sites until now, can now be offered overcoming the limits of the municipality Web sites.
3. e-Community helps effectuate a business model where the information is obtained over the Internet and the merits and service are enjoyed by actually going to the store. Thus, benefits of having more people actually shop In-Store can be expected and it is possible to activate the real community.

4 . Saitama e-Community Project Strategy

1. Having companies that have a base in the region join together

In the Saitama e-Community, since there were many who travel to Tokyo for work or study it was decided to pay attention to the daily-used stations as a hub for information.

Furthermore, it was felt that there was a tendency for the housewives etc., who stay in the community, shop at the shopping malls and supermarkets etc. in the vicinity of the station. So, it was decided that it would be effective to provide livelihood support information about the vicinity of the station. Therefore participation of the railroad company was requested.

On the other hand, since the local financial institutions had deep business relationships with the local stores etc. they were identified as effective channels for providing information and so were requested to participate.

Furthermore, since the e-Community was a system of distributing local news within the region, local media companies were also contacted.

2. Establishing neutrality

In order to have cooperation of the local municipality it is necessary to avoid being tinted with company-specific traits. So, the Saitama e-Community secured neutrality by obtaining multi-company participation from various industries.

3. Establishment of a Government & People Cooperative Enterprise Scheme

The regional portal site enterprise was central to the e-Community project. And since it was positioned as regional IT infrastructure, it was assumed that rather than being a short-term / high profit business model, it would be a long term enterprise.

Furthermore, since some administration services were also expected to be included, the Saitama e-Community studied an enterprise scheme of cooperation of the government with the people.

4. Use of local manpower for operations

Factors for evaluating the regional portal site would be, fullness of contents that relate

closely to the region and their freshness. To realize this it was felt that the use of local manpower such as housewives, students and SOHO etc. would be effective.

The Saitama e-Community planned to place a community master at each station.

5. In the near future payments to beneficiaries is also possible

According to the results of a questionnaire conducted with residents of the project area by The Japan Research Institute, Ltd., more than 60% of the residents responded that should the livelihood support information be of added value they would be willing to pay for it. So, in the near future it is felt that payments to beneficiaries.

We think that the Saitama activities can also be applied in the Kyoto, Osaka and Kobe area, where private railroads are well developed. We would like to start studies with interested regions.

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