How to Address Five Key Concerns of Enterprise Architecture Realization

To effectively manage sponsors and stakeholder requirements – and provide timely value – IT organizations need a rigorous approach to EA planning and implementation that foresees and overcomes prickly environmental challenges.

Executive Summary

No matter what approach an organization takes when embarking on an enterprise architecture (EA) initiative, success often comes down to one important element: forethought. EA methodologies or frameworks such as TOGAF and Zachman lay out the generic methods or elements associated with EA definition and realization. However, successful EA programs also require careful consideration of the organization’s mission, vision, maturity and culture. Only then can IT choose the most organizationally appropriate method. The EA entry point, or the driving forces behind the requested EA exercise, must inform the way forward.

In other words, IT must continuously survey the surrounding environment to set the correct direction of this journey. In this white paper, we cover five key environmental concerns that must be overcome to make EA a reality (see Figure 1). These concerns include:

- **Onboarding:** Identifying key stakeholders and establishing EA.
- **Commencing:** Deciding the entry point for EA and the initial steps forward.
- **Situating:** Evaluating relevance and defining the optimal path.
- **Broadcasting:** Establishing an EA awareness program.
- **Introspecting:** Continuously monitoring EA details.

Onboarding: Identifying the Key Stakeholders and Establishing EA Benefits

Every EA initiative needs to translate action into business benefits, whether through profits or cost savings. Enterprises can reap actual benefits from EA when four key dimensions (business, application, information and technology) are defined and integrated. Once that happens, the EA can help guide strategic initiatives effectively by minimizing redundancies, risks and throwaways.

The success of an EA program hinges on stakeholder belief, support, funding and participation. However, establishing EA value among stakeholders is a perennial challenge, especially because these initiatives take time to mature and achieve success. Moreover, senior management is often reluctant to allocate budgets based on distant...
projections, especially amid prolonged economic uncertainty. Hence, creating a business case for EA is always complicated.

The solution lies in profiling the stakeholders and understanding their objectives, concerns and challenges (see Figure 2).

Profiling Stakeholders
The first step is to identify the stakeholders and create a stakeholder map. Stakeholders should be profiled based on their power, influence and interest in EA. It is very likely that some stakeholders will refrain from participating, and some may even question the whole initiative. The objective of the profiling is to identify sponsors who will initiate the EA journey, as well as the key and potential players who can support it for the long haul.

Performing Needs Analysis
The key to this stage is understanding the vision and mission of the organization and being able to explain how an EA will help achieve that mission. Individual focus is often necessary to engage reluctant stakeholders. It’s not uncommon for perception gaps to lead to opposition, and organizational politics can also play a major role.

Resolving organizational politics is a gradual and cumbersome activity. To reduce perception gaps, stakeholders should be analyzed for the following:

- EA-related needs.
- Challenges.
- Metrics for success.
- Focus of interest.

Managing an EA: A Recommended Approach
Establishing Benefits
This stage involves establishing a plan to ensure EA benefits, so that the program can meet sponsors' needs. Although it is difficult to assess cost-benefits at the program's inception, creating a benefit tree can show how EA can produce profits and savings. The benefit tree can be used to calibrate the journey with milestones and list the gains along the way. The plan needs to define which EA tasks deliver what value to which stakeholders. Recounting successful case studies that reflect circumstances similar to your company’s can be a quick ice-breaker.

Commencing: Deciding on the EA Entry Point and Initial Steps
Often, the stakeholders of an EA initiative are at different starting points and are even isolated from one another. Their interests can vary widely, and so bringing them to a common point can be a major challenge.

The best way to address this hurdle is to use an EA maturity assessment (see Figure 3). Three major dimensions drive this approach:

- Stakeholder needs and associated EA initiatives.
- Business values of those initiatives.
- Organizational maturity.

A needs analysis can help organizations define the initiatives that the EA team needs to undertake, while guarding stakeholders' interests. Stakeholders, however, may have varied interests that are often project-focused in nature. EA initiatives that result from a needs analysis can be categorized in four quadrants:

- Business strategies.
- Business projects.
- IT strategies.
- IT projects.

To prioritize these initiatives, companies need to estimate their value in terms of how well they align with the organization's vision and mission, as well as their related business impact.

Shortsightedness will plague the initiative if companies embark on the highest-value elements without understanding the maturity level of the organization and the effort needed to implement the elements. There is no denying the fact that the long wait may dampen stakeholder enthusiasm. To keep stakeholder interest alive, an EA realization plan needs to focus on quick wins and regular milestones.

A maturity assessment that measures alignment with stakeholder needs and the ability to execute the mission can help organizations plan the most appropriate EA realization path. The different dimensions of maturity assessment include the following:

- A value-oriented process.
- Stakeholders' relationship.
- Availability of EA artifacts.
- Structure of contents and organization.

Entry Point Selection and Roadmapping

Figure 3
The maturity assessment also reveals the common EA improvements needed to meet stakeholder needs. Which entry point is selected varies widely depending on the expectation and measurement of success in different organizations. For example, rationalizing the enterprise technology (or application) portfolio can provide momentum for EA realization when the organization has multiple platforms (or applications) for similar functionalities. In the case of data services, enterprise business object experts can facilitate data service implementation. Similarly, EA can enable service-oriented architecture (SOA) implementations by defining an enterprise business capability map that maps business capabilities to applications.

3 Situating: Evaluating Relevance and Defining the Optimal Path
In today’s fast-paced market, scenarios change quickly across the business, technology, economic, social and political landscapes. Therefore, the relevance of the EA needs to be continuously assessed, which requires organizations to gather strategic or direction-setting information.

A key objective of EA is guiding the enterprise through organizational change. Change is necessary for organizations to remain relevant, but their ability to adapt hinges on how well the EA maintains its relevance to the organization’s needs, business or IT plans, solutions and structure. Often, the EA needs to factor in tactical requirements for moving toward the strategic goal. This also calls for changes in the EA realization plan.

Interestingly, EA deliverables not only provide strategic direction to business and IT, but they also set the execution path of the EA. To keep the EA deliverables updated, organizations need to define a strong governance framework and link existing EA deliverables to organizational processes to ensure timely updates.

For example, if there is any change in resource priorities or in the plan, the IT roadmap needs to reflect that change. Similarly, changes in the organizational structure need to be reflected in the stakeholder map, and changes in the solution architecture that call for the adoption of new technology call for an update to the enterprise technology architecture. Project catalogs also need to be updated periodically to evaluate the impact of any new project on the EA plan.

Figure 4 illustrates the process of direction-setting information. In this context, it is important to remember that broad drivers of change in EA deliverables include the economy, business and technology evolution, as well as social and political conditions.

4 Broadcasting: Establishing an EA Awareness Program
EA is a collaborative process. Stakeholders are not only the recipients of EA deliverables and artifacts, but they are also participants in shaping them. It is important to consider that enterprise architects do not typically have the authority to direct resources. Therefore, stakeholders need a sense of ownership over EA deliverables. The challenge is to attract and invite more stakeholders to participate in the EA journey.

A well-defined EA awareness program can be instrumental in elevating interests and inviting...
participation. While the focus is on key sponsors and supporters during onboarding, the spotlight here is on the members of the stakeholder map.

The value of EA can be demonstrated by citing previous successful applications of the EA’s products and services, which should inspire confidence in senior managers and executives. Organizations need to highlight specific instances of where the EA has previously offered valuable insights and solutions and incorporate stories of positive experiences. The program also needs to devise different architectural views to simplify communications about the architecture in ways that address various stakeholder concerns. In this regard, the EA scorecard and metrics are the most common ways to demonstrate the results of the EA on a broad scale.

The awareness program needs to inform stakeholders about the benefits of partaking in EA initiatives and how they can achieve those benefits. A successful approach is to divide stakeholders into groups, according to their perception gaps, and apply different types of interactions for effective communication. For example, it’s best to treat knowledge gaps and participation gaps differently (see Figure 5).

5 Introspecting: Continuous Monitoring of EA Detail

During EA realization, it is important to not only keep existing artifacts up-to-date but to also add details. The paradox of architecture is that when you get too close to the details or the technology used, you can lose sight of its beauty. On the contrary, successful architecture is very much about the details.

The necessary details of architecture include solution building blocks (SBB) and associated standards, best practices, principles and reference architectures. SBBs can be broken into components for further elaboration and act as inputs to the solution architecture involved in a particular project.

Often, the EA team guides the solution architecture definition but does not follow up during implementation to identify the practical challenges caused by the proposed architecture. The EA team needs to institutionalize a continuous feedback loop and review process across ongoing projects, as part of the governance framework. All design and implementation challenges need to be factored in, and the EA needs to be tuned to consider the practicalities. It is essential to link the EA definition process to software development lifecycle phases to assimilate all feedback.

Looking Ahead

People, processes and tools are fundamental to EA success, as these elements guide and govern the EA journey. A disciplined EA approach must address key environmental challenges and deliver better value. Further, it is important to consider that an EA is impossible to deploy in the real world without good governance and an operational model to implement it successfully.

Elements of the EA Awareness Program

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<th>Interaction Types</th>
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<td>Success Stories</td>
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Figure 5
Acknowledgments

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Footnotes

1 TOGAF is a an EA methodology developed by the Open Group Standard. For more information, see http://www.opengroup.org/togaf/. The Zachman Framework was developed by Zachman International. For more information, see http://www.zachman.com/?gclid=CN2go_SMhbsCFel9Ogod1QARw.

References


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