

From the Frontlines:

An insight to Enterprise Architecture.



What is Enterprise Architecture

Enterprise Architecture is a form of management and a documentation method. This means that the *Enterprise Architecture* can aid the management of the organization with a better view of how the enterprise works and how to bridge the gap between the current architecture and the desired future state of the architecture with a so called EA program. The EA program has to be based on an EA transformation management plan.

The documentation framework of Enterprise Architecture can be viewed as a tool the management and top leadership among others can make use of to understand how the organization interacts with the various components the organization consist of.

The best way to enable understand of how the enterprise works will be by applying (and installing) as so called repository that has to be available for all the members of the organization so they understand how the enterprise architecture is defined.

Why Enterprise Architecture is important and is diffused through one industry to another is that the management style and the documentation framework is comprehensive and tries to communicate how the systems in one way or the other can be understood by the members of the organization. Thereto are there several benefits associated with implementing Enterprise Architecture and later on Coherency Management correctly.

The rumor of the benefits often leads to that organizations in various industries wants to implement Enterprise Architecture.

“Everyone have to join the hype. Therefore should & will the business side of the organization demand that the organization (as a whole) should be able to the same as the rest of the industry” - John Goetze.

However this blog post also deals with the benefits of successfully implementing an Enterprise Architecture. Remember that all organizations have an enterprise; however the maturity of the enterprise has a great impact of how the organization can use it strategically.

Advantages of Implementing an Enterprise Architecture

There are several benefits associated with an Enterprise Architecture and as before mentioned one of these is that the organization becomes aware of the gaps in its current *Enterprise Architecture* and the gaps in how the “line of sight” works compared to its own architecture. This can eliminate irrational tasks and processes.

The Enterprise Architecture will lead to a greater degree of alignment of resource allocation to those processes that adds value to the organization and its customers (and other stakeholders).

The awareness that the Enterprise Architecture creates enable the advantage of greater awareness of the security of the organization.

Disadvantages of implementing an Enterprise Architecture

Implementing an Enterprise Architecture often leads to that the organization in one way or the other will allocate resources to an EA program that have to focus on how to work with several different identification tools and methods. Thereto a consultant, certification, employing a chief architect and enterprise architects aren't cheap and since all organizations in the world have to relate to “capacity constraints” then the implementation of an Enterprise Architecture Program will be associated with a certain risk.

There are some risks that are more common than others e.g., rejection of the Enterprise Architecture if the members of the organization feels that the EA program is a hostile take over of their departments (loss of freedom), large costs of diverting people away from the business processes to focus on assisting the EA program and learning from the EA program.

It is however worth noticing that Enterprise Architecture rarely can be implemented as a “big bang” change; however CXOs often see Enterprise Architecture as a method and management style that requires .This can be summed up in the quotation below:

”Boil the Ocean - - to use all means and options available to get something done” - Louis Gerstner, Who Says Elephants Can't Dance? HarperBusiness (2002).

However experience from the 1990s shows something differently which can be summarized in the quotation.

”If we've learned one thing from the 1990s, it's that big bang, IT-driven initiatives rarely produce expected returns.” - Brown & Hagel, HBR comment to Nicholas Carr's IT Doesn't Matter.

This means that the Coherency Architect or the EA program manager has to manage the stakeholders expectations to the Enterprise Architecture and what it will be able to provide for the Enterprise.

Legacy systems can become an obstacle for the implementation of Enterprise Architecture but it is not an imperative to decommission legacy systems or to convert them to a new platform.

“Every Architects dream is to gain access to a 'green field' which can be a field that is totally empty and where the architect can build something on” - John Goetze.

The Conclusion

It can therefore be concluded that Enterprise Architecture can lead to major benefits for those organizations who apply the management style or choose to apply the documentation framework; however the allocation of resources to initiate an EA program can lead to disadvantages as well; if not to mention that the EA program can be rejected by the employees of the organization.

However for many organizations the implementation of an EA program that is based on iterations can unlock a competitive advantage for the enterprise. Never the less it demands management commitment.