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Visible Truths And Learning Sheet

Enterprise Architecture : Are You Ready?

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In our previous VITAL Sheet (Enterprise Architecture: An Overview) we introduced you to what EA is. In this VITAL sheet we give you a guide to working out where you are along the EA “road to corporate enlightenment”. The reference for this sheet is a paper put out by the United States Government Accounting Office (GAO). The paper is “**GAO-03-584G Enterprise Architecture Management**” and is available as a pdf download at <http://www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-03-584G>. This government department has been advocating architectures for over 10 years, so EA is nothing new. **It is not a technology or project management “fad”** like we had with RAD in the 1990’s. In the preface of this paper they provide by analogy a useful way to understand what EA is. I quote “*Why are enterprise architectures so important? Metaphorically, an enterprise architecture is to an organization’s operations and systems as a set of blueprints is to a building. That is, building blueprints provide those who own, construct, and maintain the building with a clear and understandable picture of the building’s uses, features, functions, and supporting systems, including relevant building standards. Further, the building blueprints capture the relationships among building components and govern the construction process. Enterprise architectures do nothing less, providing to people at all organizational levels an explicit, common, and meaningful structural frame of reference that allows an understanding of (1) what the enterprise does; (2) when, where, how, and why it does it; and (3) what it uses to do it.*”. John Zachman used this analogy well in a conference that we went to in Sydney in 2004. He said that without a blueprint, if you wanted to knock down an internal wall in the building to make a bigger room, you could potentially cause the entire building to collapse! Armed with a blueprint you would stand a good chance of **avoiding this catastrophe**. This is a classic example of using a blueprint (framework) to handle change management.

This department recognizes 5 stages EA Maturity. You might like to think about where **your organization sits in this hierarchy** after reading the characteristics of each stage.

Stage 1: Creating EA Awareness

At Stage 1, either an organization does not have plans to develop and use an architecture, or it has plans that do not demonstrate an awareness of the value of having and using an architecture. While Stage 1 agencies may have initiated some EA activity, these agencies’ efforts are ad hoc and unstructured, lack institutional leadership and direction, and do not provide the management foundation necessary for successful EA development as defined in Stage 2.

Stage 2: Building the EA Management Foundation

An organization at Stage 2 recognizes that the EA is a corporate asset by vesting accountability for it in an executive body that represents the entire enterprise. At this stage, an organization assigns EA management roles and responsibilities and establishes plans for developing EA products and for measuring program progress and product quality; it also commits the resources necessary for developing an architecture—people, processes, and tools.

Stage 3: Developing the EA

An organization at Stage 3 focuses on developing architecture products according to the selected framework, methodology, tool, and established management plans. Roles and responsibilities assigned in the previous stage are in place, and resources are being applied to develop actual EA products. Here, the scope of the architecture has been defined to encompass the entire enterprise, whether organization-based or function-based.

Stage 4: Completing the EA

An organization at Stage 4 has completed its EA products, meaning that the products have been approved by the EA steering committee (established in Stage 2) or an investment review board, and by the CIO. The completed products collectively describe the enterprise in terms of business, performance, information/data, service/application, and technology for both its current and future operating states, and the products include a transition plan for sequencing from the current to the future state.

Stage 5: Leveraging the EA to Manage Change

An organization at Stage 5 has secured senior leadership approval of the EA products and a **written institutional policy stating that IT investments must comply with the architecture**, unless granted an explicit compliance waiver. Further, decision-makers are using the architecture to identify and address ongoing and proposed IT investments that are conflicting, overlapping, not strategically linked, or redundant. Thus, Stage 5 entities are able to avoid unwarranted overlap across investments and **ensure maximum systems interoperability**, which in turn ensures the selection and funding of IT investments with manageable risks and returns.