
Changing the culture - Enterprise Architecture Systems

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Abstract

Could you imagine running a medium to large financial department in a business using only spreadsheets instead of a proper Accounting system in this day and age? Hardly.

As a practicing Enterprise Architect it never ceases to amaze me at how everyone can see the need for an Accounting System within an Enterprise, no matter the size of the company, but by and large completely fail to recognise the need or benefits of an Enterprise Architecture System.

Is it because Accounting systems have become the norm and are embedded in the culture of the way we do business? This paper compares the two items to see how far apart they really are, and help swing the culture of business towards "accounting" for the architecture of the enterprise as part of the norm.

Introduction

In general for Architects to convince the business that "accounting for Architecture" is a good idea appears an almost insurmountable task. Some businesses "get it" though and will realise the benefits.

Architects understand that many business people do not see the benefits of controlling the Enterprises' Architecture because it is not something business people necessarily understand or even realise they should be interested in. Not surprising – it's not something that comes up within their daily business experience.

Architects have tried to convince the business people in business terms, but this approach has had some mixed successes generally, but typically only for a limited time-span. Talking about Strategy, and Return on Investment, Business Agility and Governance seems to have pricked up the ears of the business, but then only to fund initiatives for a three or six month stint just to see how it goes, before they allocate more money.

Given these short time constraints, Enterprise Architect's have tried to catch up on many years of lack of management, by doing three to six months building up something meaningful for the long term, only to have the rug pulled from beneath them by funding not being allocated. This leaves all the implemented systems unfunded and unsustainable.

Assumptions

- **Personal experience** - This paper stems from the author's personal experience within the financial industry and reading up others experiences on blogs.
- **Not a tool comparison** - This paper does not compare Applications or Tools, neither Accounting nor Enterprise Architecture Systems. However for
 - Accounts think SAP, Oracle eBusiness Suite, etc. See Accounting comparison cited below.
 - Enterprise Architecture for Modelling think; System Architect, Casewise, Metastorm EA, etc.
 - Other EA and EA integrated tools would be CMDB's, Workflow, Wiki's, etc.
- **Enterprise Architecture tooling immature** – EA tooling is still being built up in general. There does not yet appear to be a cohesive and well thought out strategy for tooling up all the diverse elements of Enterprise Architecture. Much seems to be happening via many diverse system elements such as Knowledge management tools, Metadata discovery, SOA governance tools, service catalogues, system modelling (forward and reverse), and things like auto-discovery of desktop and server installations, Configuration Management DB's, etc. Time will bring all of this together.

Accounting Systems

Let us look at why we use Accounting systems instead of Spreadsheets to manage business Accounting:

- **Control** – Proper accounting systems ensure that the free-handedness that spreadsheets allow is brought under control. Calculations are not changeable or over-writable as they would be in spreadsheets. Transactions cannot simply be deleted as rows. To adjust a transaction you have to log a new transaction.
- **Centralisation** – This might sound obvious, but centralising accounts gives immediate control, because everyone updates this account in one place through common rules. Unlike Spreadsheets where there could be many instances of information, each with a slightly different naming convention. Take stock items as an example. If the same item is given a slightly different name then the computer thinks its two different items.
- **Version control** – Many spreadsheets all with different versions, being emailed around, old versions overwriting new information, etc.
- **Auditability** – We can see who did what when and make people accountable for their actions.
- **Keeping for the financial balance intact.** – The system always balances out to zero, by using a double entry system, thus keeping everything in balance.
- **Up-to-date information at hand** – As financial transactions happen, we enter the transactions and thereby change and control the state of the finances on a daily basis. When we come to look for information it is as up to date as the latest entries that have been made.
- **What-if situation impact analysis** – Having known and trusted information as the core of the systems, allow us to easily derive and predict impacts on this information by mechanisms such as trending, graphing, grouping, averaging, and many other types of information mining.

Enterprise Architecture (EA) Systems

- **Control** – Proper EA systems ensure that the free-handedness that spreadsheets allow is brought under control. Calculations are not changeable or over-writable as they would be in spreadsheets. Transactions cannot simply be deleted as rows. To adjust a transaction you have to log a new transaction.
- **Centralisation** – This might sound obvious, but centralising certain information gives immediate control, because everyone updates this information in one place through common rules. Unlike Spreadsheets where there could be many instances of information, each with a slightly different naming convention. Take a list of Servers as an example. If the same server is given a slightly different name then the computer thinks its two different servers.
- **Version control** – Many spreadsheets all with different versions, being emailed around, old versions overwriting new information, etc.
- **Auditability** – We can see who did what when and make people accountable for their actions.
- **Keeping for the architectural balance intact.** – The EA systems currently balance out by using a system of defining certain unique elements only once, thus highlighting issues that might go out of balance by changes to-be implemented or already implemented.
- **Up-to-date information at hand** – As Architectural changes happen, we enter the transactions and thereby change and control the state of the Architecture on a daily basis. When we come to look for information it is as up to date as the latest entries that have been made.
- **What-if situation impact analysis** – Having known and trusted information as the core of the systems, allow us to easily derive and predict impacts on this information by mechanisms such as trending, graphing, grouping, averaging, and many other types of information mining.

Summary

Architecture is just a collection of knowledge about the inter-relationships between all sorts of entities (such as Servers, Operating systems, Applications, Services, Business Rules, Policies, etc.) that are inter-dependent upon each other. Because there are multiple inventory items with many complex relationships, they need to be managed and controlled as they change to stay on top of the situation. You could say the same about Finances. We do control finances, but there never seems to be enough understanding or will to do the same for Architecture. We need a cultural change if we want to become more efficient and control our Enterprises' Architectures properly.

Works Cited

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