



Enterprise Architecture
Symposium Community

Trip Report

Enterprise Architecture Symposium Community

Key Takeaways

717 attendees signed up for the Enterprise Architecture (EA) Community at Fall Symposium 2007. The theme of the EA presentation track, “architecting relationships,” reflected the need for architects to focus more on the relationships among business, information and technology, and less on the resources within these domains, as EA evolves from its traditional focus on IT architecture to embrace the broader enterprise. Gone are the days when the typical enterprise planned, built and managed all of its technology, information and business processes; now, third parties often oversee many of these elements. By designing stable yet flexible relationships among these ever-changing elements, enterprise architects can better ensure enterprise agility.

Other key takeaways from the event:

- Gartner’s survey data on EA teams suggests that most have too much of a bias toward staff with IT backgrounds rather than business ones and need to add more people skills.
- Lack of stakeholder engagement is the proximate cause of most EA program failures. EA communications must be consciously planned to maintain EA support levels.
- EA teams must focus more on information architecture and business processes, or investments in service-oriented architecture (SOA) will be wasted.
- EA teams should ensure expeditious completion of IT projects that are EA-compliant and conducted according to EA principles.

Conference Highlights

Key Issues for Business Results

According to data gathered from the Gartner for IT Leaders online EA maturity assessment tool, mainstream users are moving from Level 2 to Level 3 — close to the level at which they will be truly effective. To reach that level, they must address a host of issues that challenge most EA practitioners. For example, EA initiatives without obvious business merit will be called into question, a problem best addressed by providing a clear business context. Moreover, the pace of change is faster than most EA teams can handle. To improve speed and flexibility, EA teams should avoid attempts to architect the entire enterprise and focus instead on providing “just enough architecture, just in time” through a limited, rigidly enforced set of standards that provide modularity.

Recommendations:

- Validate the key issues for your organization, and identify the necessary objectives for EA.
- Develop strategies based on these objectives, the capabilities of the EA team and the culture of the organization.

How to Create Business-Driven Architecture Requirements

Effective EA programs bridge business strategy and technology implementation through a set of high-level requirements. This is accomplished through the creation of a common requirements vision (CRV), which captures a set enterprise business strategies and derives common requirements from them. CRV-level requirements help prioritize the initiatives in the project portfolio and provide future context to planning activities.

Recommendations:

- During the next year: With broad participation, develop a draft CRV, and ensure that it links to EA principles and content.
- In the long term: Update the CRV at least annually, and embed that process into the enterprise’s strategic-planning process.

Architecting the Narrow Waist: Leveraging Emergent Architecture to Increase Business Agility

Architects who take a top-down approach typically end up with a slew of technical standards and guidelines that constrain the behavior of the implementation specialists who build new capabilities for the enterprise. As market volatility and rapid change cause enterprises to evolve in unpredictable ways, this traditional approach obstructs rather than facilitates change. What's needed is a "middle out" architectural approach that can accommodate the rapid, organic evolution of "emergence." By using a limited set of simple interfaces — forming a "narrow waist" between a broad array of generic solutions at the top and federated components at the bottom — architects can ensure interoperability while accommodating the flexibility needed for change.

Recommendations:

- Now: Evaluate your architecture's relevance to the business, and assess your need to architect in an emergent way.
- Within a few weeks: Complete a functional and volatility assessment, and validate it with key stakeholders.
- Within a few months: Publish your identifiers, formats and protocols (IFAPs), and revise your governance processes to support emergent architectures.

Architecting the Relationships Among EA Content to Improve Results

EA should provide more than principles and standards to deliver guidance. Architectures must be logically consistent, and relationship models help ensure this. Examples of valuable relationship models include Gartner's EA Framework, application portfolio models, service manifests, and enterprise and information value networks. Models that lay out EA road maps from the current to future state provide great value to developers of future-state content.

Recommendations:

- Now: Evaluate EA team staffing to determine whether adjustments are needed to enable relationship-modeling work.
- During the next year: Develop at least one model for each EA viewpoint, and deliver instructions on how to use these models in project decision making.
- In the long term: Annually assess the need for model revisions, and update models accordingly.

Enterprise Architecture and Projects: Maximizing EA Value for the Business

For EA plans to succeed, the projects that execute them must also succeed. Therefore, it is critical to ensure that EA is aligned with projects. EA teams need to avoid being dragged into performing too much project work themselves; however, they should ensure that EA processes are linked or integrated with software development life cycle (SDLC) or project management (PM) processes — for example, by ensuring the EA compliance/waiver process is built into project approvals. If there are repeatable designs — such as technical patterns and services — that can be used in projects, document them in a content that is easy for product teams to find and leverage.

Recommendations:

- During the next year: Develop project-centric EA models, and define clear, multistage links between EA and SDLC/PM processes.
- In the long term: Monitor and report EA-supported project success, and rotate EA staff in and out of project-centric activities.

Selling Enterprise Architecture to Deliver Results

EA success depends on exemplary salesmanship. According to Gartner research, 30% of the effort in successful EA programs is spent on communication-related activities. For communication to change behavior, it should be grounded in the desires and interests of the receivers. Stakeholder analysis is key: After defining communication objectives, identify major stakeholders, understand their requirements, and craft messages that resonate with their needs and personality types; for example, business executives tend to respond better to conceptual messages, and IT people to detail-oriented ones.

Recommendations:

- Assess the extent of your communication, persuasion and change management needs, and ensure that the support needed to meet them is in place. Train staff in these areas, or hire people with the necessary skills and experience.
- Use the dynamics of persuasion to your full advantage. Understand your culture and work with it.

Emerging Trends in Enterprise Architecture: The Rise of the Information Infrastructure

Information infrastructure defines the technology components needed for enterprise information management, including data services, integrated content, metadata management, data quality and profiling, master data management and closed-loop information flows. By focusing on improving their information infrastructures, enterprises can facilitate integration, innovation and collaboration. SOA will force organizations to implement an information-centric

infrastructure that will include a common data services layer to support information producers and consumers with timely, consistent information for near-real-time, event-driven processing.

Recommendation:

- Use an information infrastructure to improve your SOA; better organize and exchange content; and better support information producers, consumers, providers and brokers within your ecosystem.

EA Workshop Findings

During Symposium, Gartner analysts hosted an EA workshop that provided participants with an opportunity to discuss and solve common issues. Just over half of the 30 participants were “architects” by title, while the remainder worked a range of IT, management and other business roles. Participants came from a variety of organizations, including federal and local governments, startup firms and Fortune 500 companies.

During the workshop, participants were broken up into five groups, each of which was asked to discuss and develop resolution strategies for one of the following five issues:

- How to define EA value
- How to gain support for EA
- How to maintain support for the EA initiative
- How to balance tactical vs. strategic EA efforts
- How to integrate EA into the overall business strategy

The first three issues were proposed by Gartner. The latter two were participant-selected, through a process of first collecting a list of pressing issues identified by individual participants, and then selecting the top two by having all the participants vote on them. It is noteworthy that the two top vote-getters (by a wide margin) both touched on strategy — a telling reflection of the high degree to which issues of strategy and strategic alignment are central to EA concerns.

Each group was given 30 minutes to examine its assigned issue, identify the key factors or challenges associated with it, and to develop strategies for resolving it. Highlights of the findings from each group discussion are summarized below.

Group 1 discussed the issue of how to define EA value, and began by agreeing that the only notion of “value” that really matters an EA context is business value — notably EA’s ability to help businesspeople solve problems. Examples include EA’s ability to act as a strategic enabler, to help identify and advance the use of new and innovative technologies and to help the business realize the benefits of rationalization. Examples of the latter include lower costs (due to fewer systems), improved quality and leverage of information, and more efficient use of skills.

The group identified several strategies to resolve this issue, including:

- Define and communicate EA value in business language — for example, in terms of its ability to improve costs, aid innovation, enable realization of the business vision and strategy, improve speed of response and better leverage information to make decisions.
- Raise awareness of this value both through education and demonstration.

Group 2 tackled the issue of gaining support for EA, which the group more specifically defined as: “how best to gain support from diverse internal and external stakeholders for your EA program.” The key challenges they identified included:

- Stakeholder diversity.
- The difficulty of changing cultures and behaviors
- Overcoming negative perceptions of EA — for example, as being too theoretical or a “fad”
- Identifying who the key stakeholders are

The key resolution strategy identified by this group was:

- Develop a vision or road map for EA, and use it with a stakeholder analysis and communication plan to gain resources, alignment and participation from stakeholders.

Group 3 discussed the issue of maintaining support for EA. This group first identified a range of challenges that make it difficult to maintain EA support. These included the following:

- Project teams often believe it takes too much effort to apply EA.
- Many affected parties are afraid that EA will cause them to lose some degree of control or power.
- It is difficult to demonstrate EA value, and hence to secure funding.
- Often, there are no negative consequences associated with not doing EA.

This group discussed several steps that could be taken to better maintain support for EA. The resolution strategies they identified included:

- Focus on demonstrating EA’s business value, and aligning it to business goals.
- Have clear road maps and migration plans.
- Work with project teams, and ensure EA does not add costs or delays to projects.
- Be sure there are consequences for inappropriately ignoring EA (for example, by tying project funding to EA compliance).
- Show progress early and often, and build faith based on previous success.

Group 4 tackled the issue of how to balance tactical vs. strategic concerns in the EA program. In discussing the issue, they agreed on the following points:

- EA programs cannot be entirely tactical or entirely strategic; organizational culture drives the right balance. EA programs must determine this balance point, and rebalance as appropriate.
- By default, EA programs tend to be too tactically biased.

The group developed the following resolution strategies:

- Address the need to increase the business knowledge of some EA team members, and add businesspeople to the EA team. Staff the EA team with both operational and strategy specialists.
- Strengthen commitment and participation of executive management, and engage other people outside the EA team.
- Select a standard method or procedure for doing strategy work.
- Regularly assess the tactical vs. strategic percentage and adjust the target as necessary.
- Insert EA into the business planning process.

Group 5 addressed the issue of how to integrate EA into the overall business strategy. The group identified the following high-level challenges as factors related to a lack of EA strategic integration: EA lacks visibility to the business, or the business does not have sufficient understanding of EA.

When EA is not integrated into business strategies, what are the common causes? The group identified many potential culprits, including the following:

- There is a need to convince business leaders that EA brings value to the understanding and analysis of opportunities.
- The EA group is too close to the IT organization, and needs more business architects as opposed to just technical architects.
- EA reports to a different part of the organization than that the one that defines and drives the business strategy.
- IT activities are not aligned with business goals.
- There is no business strategy, or this strategy is poorly defined.
- Business is stuck in functional silos and doesn't want to see the "big picture."

Resolution strategies identified by this group include:

- Help business understand EA value. Tie EA to executive's goals — address what's important to them.
- Understand what the business is measuring.
- Seek to have EA "live" between, and bridge, the technical and business organizations, to connect them and provide the "glue."
- Focus EA on key processes, rather than all of them.

What People Asked About

Echoing the "relationship" theme of the EA track, many of the questions raised by attendees — whether in one-on-ones with analysts, session Q&As or hallway conversations — focused on relationships between people, processes or things that must work together for EA to succeed. Many one-on-one inquiries focused on the relationship between EA and other enterprise processes, such as AD or portfolio management. Numerous attendee questions focused on interpersonal relationships; specifically, how to get people involved in EA and make them appreciate its value. "My biggest dilemma is the perception that EA is just an academic concept rather than something that can produce practical business benefits," one attendee told us. "I have to be ready to answer questions like 'how will this help me be more competitive?' and 'Where's the return on investment?'"

Q&As from Symposium sessions included the following:

- **How do you approach EA communications when your company has an "aggressive" (Type A) enterprise personality profile (EPP) on the business side, but the IT organization's EPP is "conservative" (Type C)?** Tailor your messages accordingly. Address the business side with messages that appeal to an aggressive EPP type, such as: "EA will enable us to do innovative things and be aggressive in our market." Then address the IT group with more conservative messages that stress simplification and risk reduction. The two can work together: The Type A people will drive the change, and the IT people will do the simplification and modernization work needed to enable the change to happen.
- **What's most important thing to know about how to approach stakeholder analysis?** Understand who can make or break your EA objectives, and find out what they need and how they need it. Then deliver that to them and build an alliance. That's the essence.


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- **What if the people I need to sell EA to — the ones with the power to make it happen — are at such a high level in the organization that I don't have any access to them?** Get to them through other people you do have access to. Exploit the “pain chain”: Businesspeople's pains reflect the burdens of their bosses, and their bosses' bosses, on up the organizational hierarchy. You probably have access to someone at a lower level. Address that person's pain, and this will in turn address the pain of his or her boss, and so on. Executives are used to people bringing more problems to the table than solutions, so if somebody down the chain proposes a good solution, it will gain recognition quickly.
 - **Why should an enterprise architect worry about validating strategy against trends? Isn't that the responsibility of the business strategy team?** That may be true. But Gartner has examined the strategies of many companies and finds that many don't do a very good job in this area. Who actually does this work is less important than ensuring that it gets done, and that it's done right — otherwise, everything you do as an architect will be compromised. So doing this work yourself may be necessary to get your own job done.

Things to Watch For

Business skills and business leadership will increasingly be the focus of enterprise's IT organizations and strategies. Gartner Managing Vice President Tina Nunno, one of several Gartner analysts who co-delivered the opening Symposium Keynote, stressed the growing need for CIOs to be business leaders first, and IT leaders second: “Businesses are telling us that they want IT leaders who look and act like them, and see the role of IT as they see it — as a business leadership role.” Moreover, she added, CIOs tell Gartner that during the next several years, they plan to hire more IT staff with strong business skills than ever before.

Among other trends to watch, Gartner expects that, by 2010:

- One-quarter of EA teams will report to business strategy or change management organizations.
- Business architecture teams will spend 60% of their time analyzing, modeling and attempting to influence the behavior of users of software-intensive systems.
- Half of EA programs that focus only on comprehensive technology standards will be terminated.