Chapter 14

An Approach to Multi-Agency and Intra-Agency Unification with Enterprise Architecture Driven e-Government in South Africa

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ABSTRACT

This chapter introduces an emerging EA (Enterprise Architecture) approach to e-government. Within the South African reality, it would be fair to expect an adequate level of e-governance to achieve a minimum level of standardized data-administration practices. For purposes of this chapter, this level of governance would be viewed as the desired strategic objective for e-government. For the past 4 years, an approach for engaging with government was prototyped and tested. Its intent was to deliver governance-oriented ICT (Information and Communication Technology) solutions. Its main objective was to provide data integrity to multi-agency requirements and help design solutions aimed at satisfying those requirements.

The diplomatic path towards standardizing data-administration practices within government is not always direct. Due consideration was given to technology, organization, people and process aspects. It would seem that the outcomes, which resulted from employing the ontology, addressed an underlying need of governmental agencies across the board, namely the need for unification. This chapter explains how multi-agency and intra-agency unification was facilitated.

INTRODUCTION

EA represents a systemic framework, incorporating design principles, which govern the evolutionary design of an enterprise.

To understand the general perspective of this chapter, it is important to understand the general condition of the IT (Information Technology) industry and e-government within a post 27 April, 1994, South Africa – the day a new democracy was born.

While certain day-to-day realities of e-government are going to be mentioned in this chapter, which may at first seem less flattering, such inclusion would be justified on the hand of setting and maintaining an appropriate context for this chapter.

Whilst readers from developing economies may be able to relate more easily to many aspects being depicted as the business-as-usual environment, readers from developed economies may become challenged by this worldview. To help explain the general reasoning behind the business-as-usual environment, additional detail and explanations would be provided.

In order to understand e-government and EA within a developing economy, a degree of understanding of the strategic realities within South Africa should first have to be constructed. To the relative stability of a mature (developed) economy, the true machinations of a new democracy and developing economy could almost be fantastically unimaginable. However, the high impact, which e-government practices typically have on the performance of national economics, would probably justify the inclusion of such a perspective.

References exist for most of the anecdotal statements and examples. However, these references are either constrained via NDAs (Non Disclosure Agreements), or deemed to be sensitive information pertaining to government. As such, it would seem contrary to the spirit of this chapter to include any of them.

Within a "new" South Africa, it is not deemed to be politically correct to conduct empirical research into any administrative failures. Criticism of the majority party is generally regarded as a hostile act, instead of a rightful act of democracy. The recent failed attempt by government to muzzle the media should suffice to illustrate the point (Langeni, 2010).

Commenting on the efficacy of e-government activities has to be approached with much discretion so as to avoid it appearing to be offensive, ignorant, and arrogant. When EA engages with the softer underbelly of the South-African administration, via e-government projects, diplomatic prowess becomes a critical success factor.

It follows that any EA competency in South Africa should definitely include diplomacy as a standard tool. Without diplomatic competency, EA cannot be effective in South Africa. However, too often diplomatic competency becomes confused with socio-cultural fit as opposed to political correctness. EA is required to collaborate effectively with all government employees, and not merely mingle in select groupings. As such, the general notion of diplomacy referred to herein should be considered in its widest sense, and not be constrained to concepts of 'etiquette', 'professionalism' and 'ethics' alone.

Specifically, this EA diplomacy would refer to an ability to engage with government in a manner, which would:

1. Further mutual respect for person, groups of persons, and profession.
2. Facilitate consensus amongst stakeholders.
3. Deliver progress to e-government initiatives.

This author's view is that EA in South Africa has for the most part become ineffective. It has mainly been supplanted by a form of "insider" function, unrelated to the practical skills EA should bring to the table. EA may have lost its strategic teeth, and hence its ability to influence e-government policy, as a function of governance.

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