

Chapter IX

Improving Stakeholder Communications and IT Engagement: A Case Study Perspective¹

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ABSTRACT

Stakeholder engagement is critical to applying enterprise architecture (EA) principles and methodologies in order to achieve value from information technology (IT) investments. Stakeholders include the business owners, data owners, developers, and technical infrastructure operational staff. Obtaining stakeholder engagement is a continuous process and is necessary at all levels of the organization. It is also an integral aspect of the governance process for IT investments. This chapter addresses the following topics as they relate to stakeholder engagement:

- *Obtaining high-level stakeholder involvement in EA governing processes and addressing major challenges in building stakeholder engagement.*
- *Illustrating how stakeholder involvement can lead to consolidation and better management of IT investments.*
- *Identifying vehicles to communicate with EA stakeholders while ensuring the architecture accommodates the style and priorities of the stakeholder community.*

INTRODUCTION

Enterprise architecture is having a profound impact on the way organizations deal with IT.

Responsibility for ensuring that IT delivers the required business results resides with the organization as a whole. EA can enable organizations to manage IT as a business that is, to drive IT

decisions based upon business metrics, align IT to business objectives, and make financially sound decisions. Most organizations recognize that their business units must have an active, collaborative role with their IT departments in order to embrace new technologies, determine innovative approaches, and establish techniques to institutionalize best practices across the organization. This means that stakeholder engagement must be found at all levels in the organization—senior-level decision makers, operational management, and project sponsors. An engaged stakeholder community collaborates with the EA program staff to determine how to achieve the business objectives and maximize the technology investments life cycle. While standards, models, and protocols can be described and documented in the EA artifacts, a successful EA program results in cost savings and an agile IT environment that can easily respond to changing business needs.

BACKGROUND

Enterprise architecture is largely about change management and the behavior of people. In many organizations, it may be necessary to call the program something other than EA because the term is not well understood. In such cases, it would be better to label the program as “enterprise planning” or “IT rationalization” and to present the principles and methodologies using terminology familiar to the organization. Regardless of the term used to define your organization’s EA program, the most important aspect for the program’s success is stakeholder involvement. To involve stakeholders in their EA programs, organizations typically establish an approach that consists of the following five components:

1. **Identifying the stakeholders:** Who are they and why do they need to be engaged in determining the IT investment strategies and tactical implementations? EA stakehold-

ers include the business owners, the data owners, the developers, and the technical infrastructure operational staff. Each stakeholder has a very different perspective on the value of EA to his or her needs and how best to implement IT solutions considering the EA framework for the organization.

2. **Communicating the value of EA:** Unless stakeholders recognize that applying EA to the decision-making process is valuable to their needs, engaging stakeholders in applying EA principles and methodologies is useless. Establishing a communications or marketing plan is critical to the success as stated in a recent publication by Alex Cullen from Forrester Research, Inc. (Cullen, 2006). Although this chapter focuses on marketing the value of EA to the personnel of IT, the best practices described in this chapter still apply to the other stakeholders.

3. **Developing stakeholder roles:** Now that the stakeholders recognize that the value in applying EA to the decision-making process, they need to understand their roles within the process so they can actively participate. Gene Leganza noted in his article published by Forrester Research, Inc. in May 2001 that successful EA practices must consider the roles of the stakeholders in the organization, including the business leaders, IT management, and IT practitioners. Leganza also notes in a May 2005 article entitled “*Public and Private Sector Business Architecture*” that the business architecture unlocks the ultimate value of an EA program. Recognizing the value of the business stakeholder is an essential cornerstone in establishing an EA program. At the same time according to Leganza, EA artifacts must be created with a purpose and a target audience and be communicated to each stakeholder group.

4. **Marketing EA to developers:** Equally important to the implementation of an EA program is the support of the IT management

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