

Chapter XII

Architecture–Driven Business Transformation

Chris Lawrence

Old Mutual South Africa, South Africa

ABSTRACT

Enterprise architecture (EA) has primarily a business focus, but it involves the kind of systems thinking typically associated with information technology (IT). Any one of its component architectures could theoretically drive a business transformation. The example of process architecture is chosen because of its implications for other architectural domains; because of the link between customer-centricity and process-centricity; and because inherited attitudes to process desperately need overhaul. An imagined diagnostic in a financial services company provides context. The diagnostic recommends a holistic alternative to current approaches to process. It articulates an explicit logical meta-model from which it draws out a number of key concepts implementable as generic physical constructs. The resulting process architecture can drive radical business transformation given the right program management, governance, and, above all, sponsorship.

INTRODUCTION

An enterprise can choose to see enterprise architecture (EA) primarily in business terms or primarily in technology terms. The choice is itself an enterprise-architectural choice. An enterprise which sees EA as primarily a business thing, is

likely to be very different from one seeing EA as primarily a technology thing. It may be that people with IT backgrounds are more likely to think architecturally than people with other backgrounds, but this doesn't mean architecture is only about IT.

This chapter assumes that EA is primarily a business concern, but that the A in EA involves applying to business the sort of conceptual and “systems thinking” more associated with “IT” than “pure business” (whatever these terms actually mean in the 21st Century). We start with a general discussion of EA and what it incorporates. We then position the relationship between EA and business transformation by looking at an organization’s bill of health. This leads to a discussion of diagnostics.

Because the diagnostic will differ widely from one organization to another, what counts as architecture-driven business transformation will also differ widely. Further progress means choosing a representative direction. For the purposes of this chapter, the choice is of a transformation based on process architecture. The approach is first established at a purely logical level by way of a meta-model. This then generates an implementable process architecture, which can form the basis of a business transformation.

BACKGROUND

The process-architectural meta-model is articulated in greater detail in Lawrence (2005), part of which is also reproduced in Fischer (2005). In 2004, Old Mutual South Africa adopted substantially the same approach as the “Old Mutual Business Process Methodology” (OMBPM).

An important source of the meta-model is experience in designing and implementing the sort of process-architected systems described in Jackson and Twaddle (1997). It is in implementation in particular where the full business-transformational potential of integrated process architecture starts to show.

TRANSFORMATION THROUGH ARCHITECTURE

Enterprise Architecture

Strategy and architecture are not the same, but they are intimately related. Business transformation is either intentionally directed or it just happens to an organization as a result of external influences. When intentionally directed it is essentially strategic. So on the face of it there seems to be a link worth exploring between architecture and intentionally directed business transformation.

Enterprise architecture typically refers to the highest or most generic level at which architecture applies in an organization. It incorporates and links together other architectures: business architecture, people and organization architecture, process architecture, information architecture, application architecture, infrastructure architecture, and so on. EA is not just the arithmetic sum of these architectures. It also considers for example how process architecture influences (or is contained within) business architecture; how application architecture implements or subverts process architecture; and how information architecture supports or frustrates business architecture.

These are all clues to how architecture can transform a business. They also point to the immense variety of ways in which that transformation can happen.

A lot will depend on current reality. At the most basic level, an organization may either have an architecture or not have one—or at least not one worth speaking of. Simply moving from having no architecture to having one (or perhaps from not knowing it has one and therefore not knowing what it is, to having the one it has chosen to have) can be a business transformation in itself.

Then at an ostensibly more sophisticated level, a business wanting to transform itself can choose to

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