5.1 Introduction

As we have seen in Chap. 4, the purpose for which a particular architecture is created largely determines the kinds of results needed. This purpose also impacts on the form and execution of a good architecture process. However, the purpose is not the only major influencer. Another major influencer is the multitude of stakeholders, which over time need to agree on the direction of the enterprise transformation. In this change process, the insights gradually evolve, while the decisions taken during the process may change the direction of this process. Therefore, the architecture process can also not be a linear one. It strongly depends on situational factors and, therefore, cannot be served by a one-size-fits-all approach.

The core process of enterprise architecture encompasses creating, applying, and maintaining the architecture for its intended purposes. In the way, this process is executed, we see best practice patterns and styles emerge, sometimes even materializing in terms of “architecture schools.” Whether a specific style or pattern is effective or not, not only depends on the purpose of the architecture, but also on the architecture maturity of an organization, it’s management style, and culture. Process quality criteria, mainly derived from purpose and maturity, are required to enable a choice for an effective and efficient architecture process. The maturity, the situational criteria, and preferred architecture patterns will all influence how to organize the continuous improvement of the architecture function.

The remainder of this chapter is structured as follows. We start by describing the core elements—create, apply, and maintain—of the process of enterprise architecting. Next, we will give examples of patterns, as well as best practices, to execute this core process. Subsequently, we will reflect on the importance of architecture maturity, introducing an architecture maturity model. We then continue by showing how the core architecture process can be organized to implement the plan–act–learn cycle of the enterprise as a whole, taking outsourcing of architecture roles as an option. Finally, we summarize the architecture process concepts introduced and highlight their coherence.

5.2 The Core Process of Enterprise Architecting

Enterprise architecting involves a number of core processes. First of all, an enterprise architecture has to be created. To be really useful as an instrument within an enterprise, the architecture has to be applied in line with its purpose. To remain useful in a changing world, an enterprise architecture should be maintained as well. Each part of the architecture process—create, apply, and maintain—will to a large extent be influenced by the purpose of a specific architecture.
5.2.1 Creating Enterprise Architecture

Let us first elaborate on the act of creating an enterprise architecture. As we have seen in Chap. 4, the purpose of enterprise architecture will determine the results which should be produced. In general, both tangible and intangible results will be strived for, each requiring its own process. What does such a process look like?

Consider the following sketch of an enterprise architecting process, mimicking a basic project setup:

Inspired by Chap. 4, one would start by selecting the (tangible and intangible) results needed. Then one would carry on by defining the activities needed to produce these results and order them in a plan. Subsequently, one would have to arrange staffing of the project and request formal permission to initiate the project. Finally, one would disappear out of sight, and reappear about a half-year later with beautiful principles, models, and views.

This is a rather naïve approach, which is deemed to be totally ineffective. To indeed realize the intention of enterprise architecture—enabling the steering of change—much more is needed. For instance, a shared conceptualization should emerge among stakeholders about:

- a to-be situation,
- the as-is situation,
- any constraints that should be met,
- purposes of the enterprise architecture that are met and those that are as yet unmet.

Even more, the concept of enterprise architecture might be a new means to the organization, in which case an introduction is called for. In the organization, several large cultural differences may exist as well, e.g., between thinkers and doers, between domain experts and management, between sales and operations, etc. This all opens up new requirements about how to communicate about and arrive at enterprise architecture results, about the benefits of (an) enterprise architecture, and about the process which is followed in creating enterprise architecture. For this kind of change, you have to involve, get access to, and get buy-in from important stakeholders before, during, and after the “enterprise architecture project.” Communication is an important aspect in this.

This raises the question: Which stakeholders are required, how and when should they be involved, and how (and to what extent) does this depend on the purpose of the architecture and context in which it will be created? Best practices learn that it is important to deal with the multiplicity of stakeholders and their concerns at the right time. Be aware that stakeholder needs and expectations may change over time. Even more, the set of stakeholders involved may change over time as well, more or less necessitating a (time-boxed) iterative approach. We limit ourselves to a few examples:

- Suppose an enterprise architecture is mainly used for decision making on an intended business transformation. Then a to-be description, possibly in the form of an sketch, is probably more relevant than specific guidelines on how to arrive at