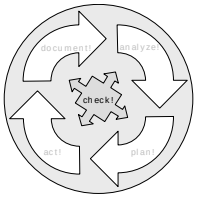
8 Safeguarding: Controlling Enterprise Architecture Development

Work expands to fill the time available for its completion (Parkinson's Law)



What is the best plan worth if one does not succeed at controlling its implementation? What is the benefit of identifying consolidation potential (e.g. in the case of development lines) in ones organization if it is left unexploited, if reference architecture models are not specified and introduced as obligatory? What is the value of eliminating redundant development lines if the capacity that is saved is not sensibly re-channeled, for instance, in order to reinforce the innovative strength of ones IT unit? We have all seen Parkinson's Law at work in organizations. The law states that work has a tendency to fill up the available time. This means that savings can only be realized where other useless activities do not fill up the space that was previously occupied by superfluous development lines, infrastructure components or the misguided projects!

Key performance indicators

This requires the measurement of performance, the checking of key performance indicators (KPIs), and the evaluation of progress. Architecture management must be made measurable, enterprise architecture (EA) must be furnished with performance indicators. This presupposes an understanding of architecture that is closely tied to the mission of the whole, and does not put the focus on system elegance, but on practical expediency.

The tenets of architecture that Vitruvius postulated to Emperor Augustus in the year 25 BC are often quoted in training programs for IT architects:[26]

- Utilitas: utility, serving of purpose

[26] Approximately in the year 25 BC, the Roman architect Marcus Vitruvius Pollio presented Emperor Augustus ten scrolls that were supposed to contain everything he knew about architecture.

- Firmitas: stability, durability
- Venustas: beauty

The focus is on the purpose of the system!

While some may argue that beauty will ultimately converge with that which best serves the purpose of a meaningful enterprise, what we are primarily concerned with here is fulfilling the purpose of a system.

This understanding is a condition for the successful establishment and deployment of EA. The utility for the enterprise inheres in the capacity of something to fulfill the purpose or mission of the enterprise. Architecture can be a vehicle of IT governance.

Mastering and controlling IT

IT governance is currently a hot topic. But what does the mastery or control of IT mean in practice? The IT Governance Institute formulates its mission as follows:

"The IT Governance Institute (ITGI) exists to assist enterprise leaders in their responsibility to ensure that IT is aligned with the business and delivers value, its performance is measured, its resources properly allocated and its risks mitigated."[27]

Do we know what our current position is (perhaps also compared to that of our competitors) with respect to the alignment of our IT with our business and the value delivered by our IT? Do we measure the performance of our IT? Do we know if the associated resources are being properly allocated? Are risks being mitigated?

EA sheds light for IT governance.

The descriptions of the anatomy of EA I have offered so far suggest that EA is no less than a powerful instrument that is capable of supporting precisely those tasks cited by the IT Governance Institute. EA sheds light on behalf of IT governance by delivering the current coordinates (documentation and analysis), the route (planning) and the navigational instruments (key figures) that are necessary for governance.

[27] www.itgi.org, 12.3.2005