TOGAF™ TO THE RESCUE: ACCOMMODATING RAPIDLY EVOLVING TECHNOLOGIES IN YOUR IT ARCHITECTURE

William A. Estrem PhD
Metaplexity Associates

In today's business environment, agility is an increasingly important attribute for an organization. The enterprise's architecture must reflect that agility in its ability to deliver demonstrable results that contribute to the organization's achievement of business goals.

It's an oft-quoted phrase that the only constant in today's business world is change. This is particularly applicable to Information Technology, which for the past two decades has been evolving in quantum leaps.

Organizations, struggling with how to absorb technological innovations into their systems without undue disruption, have turned to enterprise IT architecture to help them manage the change in and evolution of their systems. Many have a dedicated architecture group responsible for evaluating technologies, defining policies governing their deployment, and working to ensure that new systems fit well into the enterprise. An important responsibility of the enterprise architecture team is to ensure that projects deploy technologies that conform to the principles, policies, and standards that comprise the embodiment of the architecture.

To succeed, these architecture groups are relying on various methods and frameworks that bring a disciplined approach to enterprise architecture.

One particularly popular approach is based on The Open Group Architecture Framework (TOGAF), which has been developed by members of The Open Group as a comprehensive framework that provides a development method, reference models, and tools to facilitate architecture development. The Open Group distributes TOGAF free-of-charge to organizations that intend to use it for their own internal non-commercial work.

TOGAF provides significant guidance on establishing effective architecture governance and coordinating with other governance processes within the organization. Effective governance ensures that problems are identified early and that subsequent changes to the environment occur in a controlled manner.

TOGAF emphasizes business goals as architecture drivers, and provides a repository of best practice. It includes the TOGAF Architecture Development Method (ADM), a meticulous iterative approach to planning, designing, realizing, and governing the architecture. In addition, reference architectures that provide a set of templates for an organization to adapt to their specific requirements, and finally a resource base.

The TOGAF Foundation Architecture is a set of templates for creating the models needed to analyze the baseline and future state. The organization-specific architecture is created by populating the TOGAF Enterprise Continuum with Architecture Building Blocks that represent the components of the architecture and their embodiments as Solution Building Blocks.

An architecture team should use TOGAF's breadth of tools to focus on completing well-scoped projects in short order by following the steps of the ADM cycle. With each iteration through the ADM, the architecture becomes better defined, and the effort required decreases as the architecture team gains experience.

There are a number of methodologies and frameworks available – TOGAF is not the only option.

So why is TOGAF becoming so popular in the industry?

One key reason is that architects can use the TOGAF ADM in conjunction with any of the popular frameworks. The TOGAF ADM is framework-agnostic, and helps IT architects fill in the framework they might already have in use.

Enterprise architecture is gaining acceptance as a means to ensure that IT initiatives remain aligned with the business strategy. If an organization has an effective architecture, it stands a better chance at making the right decisions regarding the rapidly changing business and technology environments.

TOGAF provides an effective framework for creating effective architectures. By applying the methods and techniques described in TOGAF, the organization can monitor changes both to business and technology, and take appropriate action to revise their architecture as needed in response.

William A. (Bill) Estrem

Throughout his career, Bill has been actively engaged in professional organizations and industry groups that are committed to promoting open systems computing and industry standards, as well as in education and consulting in the areas of Enterprise Information Management and Strategic Information Systems planning.

Bill has served on The Open Group Board of Directors and is currently Chair of The Open Group Architecture Forum.

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