How is EA Used to Justify Business and IT Investments?

by Roger Evernden

The TOGAF documentation doesn't really explain how EA can be used to justify business or IT investments. And yet enterprise architecture describes the essence of an enterprise, by cataloguing the building blocks that form the enterprise, and by explaining how these components relate to one another and interact to enable the capabilities the enterprise needs to survive. In this sense, the enterprise architecture is the "body" of the enterprise – its skeleton and muscles. Investments are made so that this

- Investments in maintenance, repairs, or fixes. In this case, we wouldn't expect to see a significant change in the architecture – after all, we are simply repairing something that isn't working properly. Here we need to demonstrate that this is the best thing to do – and that the current architecture is actually the right one, but that it is somehow temporarily broken. A simple example might be an application that needs updating to the latest release. The key point here is that the degree of integration across business silos. In other words, the current investments are a necessary first step to enable future architectural options.

- Changing architectural patterns. Well in this situation the EA team should not only be using EA to justify business and IT investments, they should be involved in, and even leading discussions about alternative ways to leverage those investments. It is important here to realise that there is always more than one way to do things, and the EA team are often in the best position to identify and quantify the alternatives.

As I mentioned at the outset, TOGAF doesn't have a lot to say about how EA can be used to justify investments. In section 22.5, Enterprise Architecture and SOA, the documentation states that "Through its linking of the business context to IT, enterprise architecture readily identifies and provides justification fo[illegible] programs in relation to the b[illegible] be derived from the effort." But this misses the point. Firstly it red[illegible] between the busi[illegible] overlooks the fact that EA provides a systemic, holist[illegible] that make up an enterprise, from organization, through business to IT; EA isn't sim[illegible] that provides alignment between b[illegible] IT. Secondly it fails to mention how EA provides justification by <u>making the architectural context explicit</u>.

I've underlined those last few words because without that explicit architectural context it is impossible to explain the part that EA plays in justifying business and IT investments. Every investment will either reinforce the status quo by maintaining the current architecture, or it will replace the current architecture with a different architectural pattern or state. In fact, most investments will be a mix of or balance between these two extremes.

How is EA used to justify business and IT investments? By showing exactly and explicitly the mapping between investment and the changes required to architectural components or behaviour to make that investment worthwhile.