



TOGAF®, Will it Last?

by Roger Evernden

To start with, TOGAF has a strong pedigree. The Open Group is a very well established global consortium, formed in 1996 – so it has been around for some time.

It is supported by over 400 member organizations, and these range from IT vendors and consulting groups, through government agencies, to many of the world's leading commercial organizations. Through its various member forums The Open Group provides a platform for discussing and defining requirements for standards and certification programs.

The Open Group and TOGAF

The Open Group offers a number of certifications, and TOGAF is one of the best known. The Open Group Architecture Forum comprises more than 200 enterprises, and together are committed to gradually improving TOGAF through iterative updates, version 10 – which is in development. So the Open Group is doing in the architecture space, and this isn't likely to change.

As well as corporate support and sponsorship, there are a growing number of individuals who have TOGAF certifications. Over 16,000 are fully TOGAF certified, an impressive number, and growing.

TOGAF – The Negatives

That is all positive news, but what about the downsides?

TOGAF continues to have its detractors, and while some of the criticism is undeserved, there are some points that are quite reasonable concerns. The TOGAF exam is the subject of frequent vilification! In comparison to other professional disciplines – such as doctors, lawyers or building architects – the time needed to “learn” TOGAF and pass the exam is ridiculously short. I know of at least one person, with no experience whatsoever as an enterprise architect, who became certified in order to run TOGAF training courses!

Then there is the TOGAF exam itself, which often seems to be testing how well you can remember the gospel according to TOGAF rather than how well you understand its concepts and/or how well you can apply it as an architect.

The TOGAF Reference Model is very old, and the subject matter is constantly shifting and changing. Keeping it up-to-date involves a community of people with different priorities and viewpoints.

As a consequence, some of the material in the TOGAF documentation is a bit dated, and some of the Reference Model (Part VII) are often seen in practice in enterprise architecture are simply not yet covered by TOGAF.

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TOGAF is Adaptable

On balance? TOGAF is certainly not perfect, but then it makes the point that it should always be adapted and customized to suit the particular needs of an enterprise. There is a danger that some might take the TOGAF certification as a serious indication of skill and expertise, rather than recognising it for what it is. But at least the Open Group is making a valiant effort to document EA best practice and promote the notion of enterprise architecture as a professional discipline.

In the short term it seems unlikely that anything else will come along to usurp TOGAF. It seems to have achieved enough critical mass to become well established.

But in the long, long term I think one of two things will happen. If enterprise architecture is here to stay, then gradually it will become more established as a professional discipline – which will mean that more formal training and qualifications will become the norm.

There are already a number of bodies that have been set up to improve the professional status of enterprise architects.

But I also think that the ideas of enterprise architecture will become better understood and will become more accepted and better integrated with other disciplines – in particular enterprise transformation and strategic thinking. If that happens, then the term EA will not be known by reputation but by building architects.

TOGAF is therefore a standard for the process, but not the final destination.

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