What does TOGAF® Certification really mean to you?

by Roger Evernden

One starting point is to think of TOGAF certification as an achievement. It shows that you have taken time to learn about TOGAF, and that you know enough to pass the exam. It is really important for members of a profession to "speak the same language" and have a common foundation of expertise. This is partly why learning TOGAF requires you to learn and remember a basic glossary of terms.

It is also why TOGAF provides an iterative process for developing architectures (the Architecture Development Method – ADM), and why it provides a set of integrated frameworks (it has been called a "framework of frameworks").

By providing this common foundation, TOGAF certification gives enterprise architects a "visible trust mark", which means that potential employers or clients can trust you as a professional with a degree of TOGAF knowledge.

So TOGAF certification means you can speak a common professional language, and you have a basic level of specialized knowledge about an architecture framework. But is it enough?

The quick answer is no – because becoming an enterprise architect is more a journey than a destination. Here are five things you can do in addition to becoming TOGAF certified, that will help develop your profession as an enterprise architect.

1. You can get all the certifications you like, but employers and clients will still look for experience. And good enterprise architects have a lot of experience. So get out there and architect! If you don't have the skill levels to get an enterprise architect role, use your existing experience to find a relevant architect role, but try to get that role within the EA team, or working as closely as possible with enterprise architects.
2. Read both good and bad EA case studies. These have always been available at EA conferences, but increasingly there are prestigious awards for successful EA projects. These provide plenty of useful examples. Don't forget to include some unsuccessful projects. Why did they go wrong? How would you have done it differently?
3. Find a mentor or coach. The best option is [illegible] within the enterprise where you are already working. Spend time [illegible] about what they [illegible] decisions they make, and why they made them. If you want to [illegible] get a professional coach or mentor who can really [illegible] knowledge, skill and confidence.
4. Join architecture communities. There are plenty of these available, you could try a [illegible] start with TOGAF-related [illegible] a look to see what [illegible] topics are. As with [illegible] that there will be [illegible] relevant, incorrect [illegible] general sift through several community sites first to get a feeling for the key topics, and then explore the areas that interest you most.

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5. Enterprise Architecture is still emerging as a profession, but organizations are starting to appear that aim to advance and promote this professional status. It's worth seeking them out and becoming a member to continue your journey of progression.

So... what does certification really mean to you? Does it stand on its own as an achievement, or will it be a step on the journey to becoming a professional enterprise architect?

TOGAF certification is certainly the best and the most common public endorsement for enterprise architects. But as with enterprise architecture, you always need to put it into a wider professional context.

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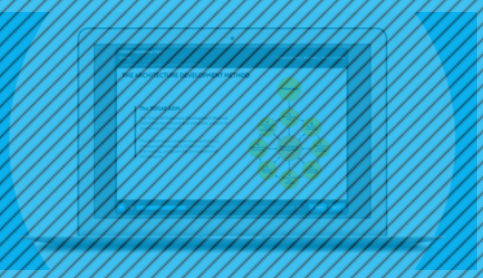

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