



What is an Architecture Roadmap?

by Roger Evernden

OK – I know this is a bit of an obvious question. A roadmap is clearly a way from getting from one architecture state to another – a way of plotting the route from current architectures to target ones. But that doesn't stop architects asking the question: what is an architecture roadmap? It's a question that I frequently get from clients. What they are really asking is: what are the best ways to analyze, define and document an architecture roadmap?

In TOGAF the purpose of an architecture roadmap is:

The Architecture Roadmap lists individual work packages that will realize the Target Architecture and lays them out on a timeline to show progression from the Baseline Architecture to the Target Architecture. The Architecture Roadmap lists the 'work packages', business and information systems, that will be implemented in each stage. Transition architectures are used to effectively realize the Target Architecture. These are identified as intermediate steps. The Architecture Roadmap is developed throughout Phases E and F, and informed by readily identifiable components from Phase B, C, and D within the ADM.

Section 36.2.7

TOGAF also describes the typical contents of a roadmap – which gives more of a clue about what is included in one, and what it looks like. TOGAF lists five content topics:

1. Work package portfolio: this is a detailed list of all of the work packages needed to deliver or realize the architectural requirements.
2. Implementation Factor Assessment and Deduction matrix: this is the technique recommended by TOGAF for analyzing the risks, issues, assumptions, and dependencies behind the proposed changes.
3. Consolidated Gaps, Solutions, and Dependencies matrix: this is the other major technique from TOGAF for creating a consolidated roadmap; for each of the four architecture domains it shows the gaps, solutions, and dependencies between the current and target architectures. These are identified whenever there is a major architectural change. Again TOGAF provides guidance on exactly how these are identified and what they should contain.
4. Finally, implementation recommendations provide criteria for measuring projects, milestones, and a list of the required sub-business blocks (SBBs).

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But that's about all you get from TOGAF: the purpose of a roadmap and some typical contents. In Phases B, C, and D you will also find a step to "Define Candidate Roadmap Components" – which gives very little guidance on how to actually do this! Then in Phase E there are steps to "Review and Consolidate Gap Analysis Results from Phases B to D" and "Create the Architecture Roadmap and Implementation and Migration Plan" – which again don't go into enough detail to really explain how this is done. Hence the question: what is an architecture roadmap?

So here are some of the things that I use with clients to help explain the bits that TOGAF doesn't cover:

- Most importantly, remember to think as an architect! This means describing how and why the current architecture constrains the strategic needs and capabilities of your organization. And it means defining future options that show how the current architectures enable the realization of strategic needs and capabilities, or how they constrain the concerns of stakeholders. This requires an explicit description of how the current architecture constrains the realization of strategic needs and capabilities. The best way that I know to record this information is through a high-level enterprise pattern, which shows the most relevant components, how they are organized, and how they interact. There should be an enterprise pattern for any alternative target architecture, and an intermediate transition state between the current enterprise pattern and the target pattern. For example, a "Disconnected Channel Architecture" is the current pattern and the target pattern is for an "Integrated Multi-Channel Architecture".
- For each enterprise pattern it should be possible to drill-down to lower levels of detail. The Integrated Multi-Channel Architecture might have a drill down to relevant channel-related business processes, which might drill down to related applications, data sources and multi-media libraries.

The ADM implies that roadmap components for each of the four domains are developed independently from each other (Phases B, C and D), and only consolidated in Phase E. In practice, most EA teams that I work with will be developing an integrated enterprise-pattern based roadmap throughout these phases, to show how the proposed changes fit into the overall evolution of the architecture.

A key role for the EA team is to examine alternatives and to help decision makers decide which path to take. So it is vital to explore these options, and the best way to do this is to show alternative roadmaps mapped to a common timeline. This makes it easy to show where the alternatives diverge, and whether they are completely different choices with different end-target states, or separate trails leading to the same target.

One final suggestion is that each state, or transition state, should include information on the costs, risks, and benefits of the state. This helps to choose one option over another.

So what is an architecture roadmap? Well, it is a sequence of enterprise patterns. A roadmap from any other is that it highlights the constraints, enablers, and options. TOGAF doesn't emphasize this point enough! Keep asking whether the roadmap you are producing explicitly shows how each state in the roadmap is constrained by the current architecture, and you will be able to create a better roadmap.

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