

# Fostering an Enterprise Architecture's Value Proposition Using Dedicated Presentation Strategies

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## 1 Enterprise Architectures as Means in Business - IT Alignment

As exclusively technology-focused solutions do not provide any strategic competitive advantages nowadays ([1]), IT service provision needs to focus on business requirements. Consequently, adequately aligned IT services need to combine a good efficiency-/effectiveness ratio and adequate innovation power with regard to a business' overall strategic objectives ([2]). According to Henderson and Venkatraman's model of strategic Business - IT alignment ([3]), the necessary comprehensive change coordination and management approach needs to comprise business strategy, organisational structure and processes as well as IT strategy, IT related processes and infrastructure. In addition, Aier ([4]) shows that sustainable changes within an organisation demand an active participation of all affected persons (strategy of participation). At the same time, the affected systems need to be fully compatible or to be separated completely (strategy of consistency)<sup>1</sup>.

Taking into account requirements of aligned and sustainable changes in an organisation, a common information and communication base is required to foster coordination between the involved stakeholders. As recent surveys by e.g. Infosys ([5]) and the Institute for Enterprise Architecture Developments (IEAD, [6]) show, Enterprise Architectures (EA) are widely expected to provide the common foundation, an integrated management of organisational capabilities, applications and IT infrastructure, can be build upon.

Though recent EA developments revealed a growing maturity in this area (see e.g. Hafner and Winter's article indicating a set of standard EA layers and a standard EA development process model, [7]), evidences from the field show, that an EA's value proposition cannot be released easily. In particular, as our

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<sup>1</sup> Here we apply a rather broad notion of the term system, not only including information systems, but also organisational structures within an organisation.

case studies with an Australian utility company and a Swiss insurer as well as the aforementioned EA surveys show, an EA's perceived value to non IT-related stakeholders remains a major issue currently.

## 2 Why Haven't Enterprise Architectures Delivered Yet?

As outlined by a Gartner report in 1995 ([8]) architecture should not be limited to documents and models only, but also be considered as an ongoing and iterative (political) process. Consequently, in the context of this paper we will apply a comprehensive definition of EA, as given by Schoenherr and Aier, considering EA as the "joint action of technological, organisational, and psycho-social measures during development and operation of enterprise information systems" (see [9], p. 3). Given Henderson and Venkatraman's work it does not focus on IS solely, since (sustainable) changes within IT must inevitably be accompanied by appropriate business changes and vice versa. In the light of our definition an EA needs to satisfy two major requirements consequently:

- Meet EA stakeholders' concerns, i.e. capture the right information
- Offer EA content to stakeholders in a satisfactory way in terms of:
  - Architecture effectiveness (doing the right things)
  - Architecture efficiency (doing the things right)

Investigating recent surveys ([5,6]) in more detail, it can easily be noticed that although most EA applicants intend to solve questions from various areas, only a few actually address issues from non-IT areas. In addition, it is worth noticing that the majority of the enterprise architects are associated with their organisation's IT departments primarily.

Proper et al. ([10]) investigated the principles underlying a modelling concept's utility in more detail. Thereby they found, that a model's value to a viewer is determined by three major components: appropriate consideration of the model user's concerns, the applied meta-model (i.e. the concepts used by a viewer when observing the domain) and the modelling outcomes' representation. Consequently, the lacking value proposition for business stakeholders might partly be explained by different concerns applied by the model creator (usually predominantly IT-related) and the future model users (business related).

This is due to the second component of Proper's findings, the underlying meta-models in the modelling process. Proper et al. arguably presume that model users are able to express their viewpoints. Yet, it would not ensure a full understanding necessarily as it will require the use of language. Given their differing meta-models, model user and creator are subject to all sorts of (implicit and unintended) misunderstandings by using the same words (symbols) for different concepts (thoughts) and vice versa (see concept of the semiological triangle, [11]).

### 3 Using Presentation Strategies to Foster an Enterprise Architecture's Value Proposition

Although a full alignment of the meta-models by model user and creator might not be achievable (see section 2), a better alignment leading to an enhanced EA value proposition remains desirable. Assuming an appropriate coverage of the relevant domain, we propose the introduction of a dedicated *presentation strategy* implemented by a *presentation layer* to foster the intended harmonisation. In doing so, the presentation strategy assures an adequate level of the provided EA services, whereby the presentation layer enables the modelling outcomes' presentation according to stakeholders' needs and skills.

By integrating a presentation layer, we also avoid the need to establish different architectural descriptions for distinct stakeholder groups. Instead, Enterprise Architects will be enabled to take advantage of current (IT-related) modelling methodologies ensuring consistency and integrity of large models, while at the same time presenting the required information in an appropriate and meaningful manner to stakeholders from non-IT related areas. Nevertheless, such a layer implementation will face three major challenges: the determination of the right information for the targeted stakeholders, the establishment of appropriate presentation techniques and adequate value communication as an issue in EA management.

Apart from issues surrounding different universe perceptions, EA information requirements engineering will also suffer from the current lack of EA value awareness by the targeted audience. Therefore we propose the application of an *EA Reference Query Set* targeting a common set of information needs by non-IT related stakeholders. In doing so, the query set will not only foster an early value perception but also support the targeted stakeholders in determining potential future applications of the captured information. As an approach towards appropriate presentation techniques, we currently investigate the use of *Business Information Sheets* providing condensed and preprocessed readily applicable decision-relevant information on a single page which can be detailed upon request.

Though, as already highlighted briefly above, a presentation layer's services need to be reevaluated and revised constantly. Therefore, it must be accompanied by an overarching presentation strategy assuring not only an adequate stakeholder involvement but also well-defined feedback and reevaluation cycles.

The approach described in this position paper is part of our investigation concerning the value proposition of an EA on a corporate level. In course of our research and our case studies we developed a comprehensive EA value realisation model based on the model of IS success by DeLone and McLean (see [12, 13]). Thereby, the presented presentation strategy and layer approach forms the first stage of our value realisation model, ensuring a sufficient stakeholder value perception and awareness. The latter will be turned into realised EA value subsequently using appropriate EA governance strategies.

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