EA Governance and Lessons Learned in Small Departments

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Public Service Commission
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About the Public Service Commission

- Federal department, founded in 1908
- Mandate: Ensuring merit-based, non-partisan staffing within the GC
  - Most visible activities: GCJobs; Second-Language Assessments; Audits
  - Also: Staffing assessments, political activities authorizations; investigations
- Roughly 750 employees, 90$M-100$M budget
  - Gatineau headquarters + 4 regions: Halifax, Montréal, Toronto, Vancouver
- Information Technology Services Directorate (ITSD)
  - 100 Employees, 12$M-14$M budget
  - Three directors: Application development, Infrastructure, Corporate IM/IT
  - Roughly 15 projects at any given time, including 3-4 “major” ones.
ABOUT ENTERPRISE ARCHITECTURE AT THE PSC

• 2010-2012 (death by SSC & ETI), renewed 2015
• Housed within IT / Corporate IM/IT management
  • Strong integration with PMO, Planning, Client Business Services
• 4 positions: 1 manager, 2 technical specialists, 1 team lead
  • Sometimes a student – limited usefulness in EA context
• Long-term plans to incorporate Business Analysts
• TOGAF training expected, provided
• Issue: Hiring and Retention
  • A good EA can do anything!
EA Maturity Level Self-Assessment

• 2015: Level 1
  • Many oversight mechanisms in place, awareness, desire to move forward
• 2019: Level 2.5
  • Understanding of “What is Enterprise Architecture?” for the PSC
  • Strong integration with PMO, Planning, Governance
  • Issue: Staffing levels and ability to deliver
  • Issue: Informal focus on deliverables, not so much on EA standards
• 2020: Level 3
  • Sustainable staffing level and resilience, repeatable processes, more rigour
• No intention of aiming for level 4 or 5
  • Requires more resources than the PSC is reasonably expected to allocate
  • Impact: Limited appetite for EA repository, frameworks, meta-models
EA IN A SMALL DEPARTMENT

• Challenges
  • Constant need to prove business value
  • Retention/Focus remains a challenge
  • Jack-of-all-trades required
  • Always do more with less
  • Mandatory alignment with Treasury Board Secretariat (TBS) guidance

• Opportunities
  • EA guidance and framework from TBS is increasingly helpful
  • Close alignment with PSC business lines
  • Easier to establish the practice by taking over unwanted roles
  • Easier to discuss issues with colleagues as colleagues
  • Easier to shift the organization
EA's Home Field: The weekly 90-minutes Architectural Review Committee (ARC)

  - No governance re-invention = Easier fit
- Equivalent to a Departmental Architecture Review Board mandated by TBS, adapted for small organization purposes
- Chaired by EA Manager; voting members include all IM/IT managers
  - “Senior Technical Discussion Group”
- Blends operational review and architectural review
- “Architecture review as a habit, not an event”

Sample Agenda

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<th>PART I - OPERATIONS</th>
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<tr>
<td>1 ● Welcome / Opening Remarks</td>
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<td>2 ● Last meeting’s minutes approval and Action Items Review</td>
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<td>3 ● Change Approval Board (CAB) and DMC debriefs</td>
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<td>4 ● Release Schedule</td>
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<td>5 ● Operational items</td>
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<td>■ ETI, Windows 10, Firewall Upgrade, SuSE server update</td>
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<td>6 ● IT Security update</td>
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<th>PART II - PROJECTS &amp; ARCHITECTURE</th>
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<tr>
<td>6 ● Project Management Office Update</td>
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<td>7 ● Committee Review: Arrivals, departures, agenda changes</td>
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<td>8 ● Architecture items</td>
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<td>■ Architectural Review – GCJobs Transformation Options Analysis</td>
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<td>■ Overview of the newest changes to the Directive on the Management of Information Technology</td>
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<td>■ Upcoming: DMC presentations, APerforM, Impromptu Replacement, updated roadmap roadshow, secure file transfer</td>
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<td>9 ● Roundtable / Closing</td>
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The PSC has a strong governance framework
ARC makes recommendations to the ITSD Directorate Management Committee, which approves and/or refers to other business-inclusive committees such as the
- Sector Management Committee
- Mid-level corporate management
- Project Management Committee
- IM/IT Project management
- IM/IT Management Committee
- Senior IM/IT Strategy discussion; gateway to highest-level Executive Management Committee
INTEGRATION IN PROJECT PRIORITIZATION

• During the annual Project Prioritization cycle…
  • EA discusses all project proposals with the business clients
    • Using the TBS concept case template as basis for proposal submissions
  • EA ensures that projects are aligned with the enterprise
    • Occasionally modifies/merges proposals to ensure enterprise alignment
    • Writes “enterprise”-class project proposal
  • EA evaluates the technical alignment of the projects
    • EA alignment recommendations are discussed at the ARC; submitted to the CIO for input in the prioritization assessment
  • EA participates in the costing exercise
    • Submits assessments, provides EA involvement estimate for projects
INTEGRATION IN PROJECT MANAGEMENT

• Enterprise Architecture is explicitly included in the organization’s Project Management Framework:
  • EA helps define the project in initial proposals
  • EA identifies interrelationships between projects
  • EA builds/oversees the options analysis when needed
    • Takes the lead in gathering requirements for enterprise projects
  • EA oversees and approves conceptual architecture when needed
    • ARC approval is embedded in gating mechanisms
  • EA oversees consistency of project alignment with plan
EA = CLIENT RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT

• EA is responsible for the application portfolio management (APM) role
  • Link between corporate standards and client relationships.
• Conscious decision to position EA as a third-level intake group, taking over
  requests that Helpdesk is not prepared to process
  • Early contacts lead to better project submissions
  • EA finds requests commonalities, and proposes enterprise solutions
• Software intake, analysis and recommendation
  • Speaking to business clients to find enterprise solutions
    • Enterprise Secure file transfer solution
    • Recent example: R/Rstudio, Python/Spyder for data analysis, distributed via Anaconda
      package manager
• Exploring facets and consequences of software approval
  • The EA-built analysis framework for new software, based on previous experience, includes
    consideration of business requirements, enterprise sustainability, information management,
    cyber-security, application development and integration, server/desktop support, etc.
The EA Blueprint/Roadmap

- Links mandate with IT capabilities and their implementation (blueprint)
- Illustrates 3-year IT plan (roadmap)
- Aware of the GC Capability Model but does not duplicate it
- “Layers” Business, Corporate, IM/IT, and GC capabilities
- Aligns with IT plan, APM, Technology Bricks
- Presented to other areas of IT, PSC
  - Used to show breadth of ITSD activities, approved projects, long-term plan
  - “Calling Card” of EA
- Changes frequently
- Now informs the planning cycle

Layer 1: PSC Priorities (Mandate and Priorities)
Layer 2: Business Capabilities (Directly Supporting Mandate)
Layer 3: Corporate Capabilities (Supporting the Organization)
Layer 4: IM/IT Capabilities (Supporting IM/IT Work)
Layer 5: GC Capabilities (Standards, tools and GC providers supporting the PSC)
**Positioning EA as an Analytical Team**

- The PSC hires Enterprise Architects primarily based on IT experience and analytical ability.
- “The X-Files”: EA as a strategic think-tank for unusual requests
  - Emerging technologies
    - Recent example: Machine Learning approach
  - Senior Management requests
    - Recent examples: Intranet Renewal, Induction Loops, “What about this app?”
  - Cross-disciplinary requests packaging
    - Ongoing examples: Application Performance Management, Development Tools Renewal
- Minimize tactical input for projects. Focus on the enterprise strategic perspective that only EA can provide.
Distributed Enterprise Architecture

• A small EA team cannot do it all by itself
  • It should also maximize its interventions – focus on what only EA can do
• The solution: Distributed Enterprise Architecture
  • Create accessible, shareable, usable documentation
  • Become part of existing processes
  • Be clear, specific and predictable in what you require from others
    • Success metric: “I know what you’re going to ask me…”
• Done correctly, the organization self-organizes around the basic principles of EA, allowing enterprise architects to focus on more complex value-added work
  • It also helps EA survive fallow periods
**THE PRACTICAL EA SYMPOSIUM FOR SMALL ORGANIZATIONS**

- When you can’t quite find the right event for your learning plan…
  - “If you have $3000 to send me to a conference, you have $3000 to help me organize a conference”
- Keep scope focused: 50-60 seats for small-organization enterprise architects.
  - “This is like organizing a writers’ convention”
- Find allies, speakers, or at least people who won’t stop you.
  - HoIT, SSC, TBS, PSC management
- Re-use internal resources: Conference room, Communication and Graphic design expertise, on-line registration tool, existing EA community forums and networks, Webex
  - Total cost for those: 0$
- Spend the money on what matters most: the food
  - “You’re eating my training budget”
- Result: 2-day informal conference, 50-60 on-site attendees (+Webex attendees), great speakers, a few tweets, happiness for all (including management)
  - “This was the first time Alex Benay re-tweeted me!”
LESSONS LEARNED

1. Staff adequately (at least 2 enterprise architects, preferably 3)
2. Take over tasks that no one else wants (APM, standards, IT plan)
3. Derive your authority from official documentation (thanks, TBS)
4. Hardcode EA governance in your own committee’s decisions
5. Aim for the enterprise/strategic quadrant, not project/tactical
6. Become an early point of contact with business clients
7. Memorize, vulgarize everything coming from TBS/SSC/PSPC
8. As an architect, do the work that no one else can
9. Keep management happy so that they ask for more
10. Follow-through is crucial (there’s a correlation with tenure)