



How can an Enterprise Architect be more engaged?

by Roger Evernden

Many parts of TOGAF describe “how” we go about architecting. For example, the bulk of the documentation is based around the Architecture Development Method (ADM), which “describes a method for developing and managing the lifecycle of an enterprise architecture.” The ADM gives a detailed step-by-step guide, but it doesn’t really give you practical tips on how to engage with stakeholders. Then there are the various techniques, described in Part III - ADM Guidelines and Techniques; but again, TOGAF gives the basic instructions for using each technique, but it doesn’t give real-life hints and tips about what happens when you use the technique in an interview, a workshop, or in any other analytical situation.

Knowledge management practitioners make a distinction between knowing what to do, knowing why we need to do it, and knowing how to do it. TOGAF explains how to architect by telling you what you need to do, but it isn’t so good at explaining why you need to do it. TOGAF is not going to give you the insights that help you to develop the deeper understanding of Enterprise Architecture - the “know-how”, the instinctive capabilities that are so important.

One way you can get to know-how to be an enterprise architect is by engaging more with your stakeholders. Here are my top tips on how to become more engaged:

- The most important one is to think as an architect – which has become a mantra that I repeat endlessly! The key thing is to keep asking yourself whether you are relating concerns and solutions back to your architectural descriptions. Have you explained how the current architecture is causing a concern? Have you explained how a future architecture will address these concerns? If you relate everything to the components, configuration and behaviour of the enterprise architecture then you are thinking as an architect.

- Seek opportunities to talk with stakeholders. As you apply the ADM, ask yourself which stakeholders could help you? Think about the questions that you would ask them to find out more about their concerns and to link these to the architecture descriptions. Think about the information and insights that you've revealed and how to communicate this back to stakeholders.
- Leverage artefacts. Architects spend a lot of time and effort creating work products which get used once or twice in a project and then get forgotten. If an artefact describes an important part of the architecture, then it can be reused. Which artefacts from a specific project could be made more generic, to become part of the reference architecture that can be used across many other projects? Which artefacts might be useful to a wider audience? For example, you might analyse some vital capabilities, and outputs here might be useful to business analysts, strategists, IT teams, or human resources.
- Be proactive. Actively look for opportunities to engage with stakeholders, especially the ones that are influential, important, or make the decisions that matter. Look at your use of the ADM – where are the key contact points? Where are the opportunities for review and debate? Where and how can you influence discussions? Find allies among your stakeholders. Educate those who have a negative view on the use and value of enterprise architecture.

EA teams that are more engaged with their stakeholders are more successful than teams with a more passive attitude. Of course, there are two sides to becoming more engaged, and the EA team may not have direct control over their stakeholders and whether they want to be involved with architectural thinking! But there is plenty that individual architects and EA teams can do to become more engaged – and I hope this blog has helped.



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The image shows a laptop screen displaying the TOGAF Architecture Development Method (ADM) diagram. The diagram is a circular flowchart with 'Preliminary' at the top, 'Business Architecture' on the left, 'Information Systems Architectures' at the bottom, and 'Technology Architecture' on the right. The center contains 'Architecture Change Management' and 'Opportunities and Solutions'. The screen also shows text: 'THE TOGAF ADM' and 'The TOGAF Architecture Development Method (ADM) is a framework for developing and managing an enterprise architecture. The ADM includes establishing an architecture framework, producing architecture templates, standards, and guidelines for the realization of architectures.'