

11 Oct 2015

Is the enterprise architect an agnostic information architect?



Preamble

On a fateful day in 1823 whilst playing English school football at Rugby School, William Webb Ellis picked up the football and ran with it (and probably got penalised for the infringement). Yet the code of rugby union was only formalised in 1845, nearly 22 years later.

Having now concluded that I simply do not belong in the Enterprise Architecture space, I have suddenly discovered a new freedom of sorts.

Since 1991 (over 24 years ago) when I completed the development of my approach to solving the much publicised business-information technology gap, I seem to have been at cross purposes and out-of step with just about every system development life cycle approach and business analysis/architecture framework and their practitioners. Every time I commented on something about any topic in the EA space I seem to have been treading on toes and even though my intentions were (in my humble opinion) entirely honourable, I nearly always seemed to get it wrong in someone's eyes. I found I was spending more time trying to 'say what I meant' rather than 'meaning what I said'.

Thankfully, after 6 months of 'treading on toes', I have finally 'seen the light'. Hence having now established my own playing field, written the rule book and declared the objectives of the game I am playing, I can at last stop 'zigging' when everyone else is 'zaging' (or vice versa). Whilst most people will probably view me as an 'egotist' perhaps one day the spirit of William Webb Ellis may prevail.

Why is the ea an agnostic ia?

By one definition an agnostic is someone who is 'uncertain of all claims to knowledge' or 'Someone who is doubtful or noncommittal about something'. Note I am not referring to the use of the definition in a religious context.

Nearly every LinkedIn EA group that I have been associated with or Pulse article that I have read seems to keep complaining that 'something is rotten in the state of Denmark'. With over 900 frameworks to choose from (here I am grateful to an ea who drew my attention to the fact that the 60+ that I originally thought were available was totally inaccurate), no wonder the ea is finding it hard to come to grips with what an ea is supposed to do.

It was not until I got 'called out' in a discussion and virtually accused of trying to aggressively attempt to change the subject in a discussion they personally launched (which I was actually not doing) or implying that I felt the work undertaken by others was 'a pile of c##p' (which I never wrote), that made me make my decision to remove myself from a space wherein I felt I was really not wanted.

However I am grateful to the individual ea who published a Pulse article asking eas if their EA was capable of answering a number of pertinent questions. At first I was going to comment on their post, but after reading their comments to other comments, I was not sure whether my comment would have been welcome. Hence I will post my comment to their article here.

23 EA questions

As the framework that I offer addresses information architecture (IA) rather than enterprise architecture (which in my humble opinion is a subset of IA) I analysed the 23 questions and concluded that they can be answered, but it will require the disciplines of more than one information architect working with a seamless set of inputs and outputs to meet the challenge.

In trying to understand the question (which I view as a 'static complex problem'), I had to use semantic modelling techniques to help me understand the question (which I may or may not have fully understood) and then had to frame the answer around the component parts of the technique I use in order to come up with a composite answer. Errors and omissions excepted.

I have summarised my findings by identifying which of the 6 information architects (the first 3 architects being business centric and the last 3, IT centric) is best equipped to answer the question as follows:

- Objectives architect: 1 – 8, 10 – 18, 20, 22, and 23
- Knowledge crafting architect: 1, 2, 4 – 6, 9, 11 – 20, 22 and 23
- Strategy architect: 1, 4, 11 – 13, 18, 20 and 23
- Data architect: 1, 4, 12, 13, 16, 18, 20 and 23
- Data base architect: 1, 4, 12, 13, 16, 18, 20, 22 and 23
- Application architect: 1, 4, 16, 18, 20 and 23

As can be seen from my findings, each question can be addressed by multiple ia disciplines.

I have produced an internal document showing how I came to these conclusions and may be prepared to discuss them if anyone is interested.

Thank you for taking the time to read my article.

Charles Meyer Richter
Principal information architect
Ripose Pty Limited

PS I bear no ill will towards anyone who has ever 'called me out' or attacked my approach (it is always a good learning experience, as long as I can walk away alive). As I near my allotted 'three score and ten' age, I am comfortable with all that I have done and whatever happens in the future, I will greet with fervour.