

Itana Book Club

“Chess and the art of enterprise architecture”

December 2, 2016

Background

- “Chess and the art of enterprise architecture” by Gerben Wierda, published 2015
- Relatively short and easy read (~ 200 pages)
- Other material
 - Blog at <http://enterprisechess.comand>
 - YouTube videos – search on author’s name
- Big **THANK YOU** to:
 - Keith Hazelton (U of Wisconsin) for recommending the book
 - Piet Neiderhausen (U of Washington) for setting up Google Docs and seeding questions
 - Daniel Black (Miami U.) for organizing the book discount with the author

Logistics

- Interest from over 30 Itana members spanning 8 time zones
- Online survey to determine book club logistics
- Conference calls + collaborative editing a shared document
 - Book Club folder in Itana's Google Docs
- Conference Calls
 - Background (Chapters 1-3)
 - Applying a Chess Approach (Chapters 4-7)
 - Discussion with the author
- Between 10 to 15 active participants

Book Introduction

- YouTube video provides a very good synopsis.
- Book was written after the author had implemented his ideas
- His approach was not always easy and not always a 100% success story

Basic Tenets

- No empirical proof that EA methods or frameworks are working
 - EA is more of an art, like management and business administration
- EA tends to oversimplify sometimes leaving out architectural significant details
- EA goals should be preventing IT chaos and managing Business-IT complexity
 - Ensure business-IT landscape fits strategic goals

What Hasn't Been Working

2 Orthodoxies for setting up EA

1. Centralized EA Group with Solution Architecture as part of project domain
 - Current State, Future State, Gap/Roadmap issues (later slide)
 - Large, unused reference architectures
 - Compliance and Dispensation
 - Domain “know-how” exists at the solution architect level
2. Central Design Office with all architect in a single group
 - Multiple ship captains problem
 - Domain responsible for the change (e.g. project)
 - Architecture responsible for design of that change
 - Domain doesn't feel responsible for their own architecture

What Hasn't Been Working

Current State, Future State, Gap/Roadmap

- Doesn't fit real world complexity or volatility
- EA is a lot like playing chess, only that:
 - Board is larger
 - Its size/configuration changes
 - Pieces vary and how they move vary
 - Rules can change

Architecture Principles

- Prescriptive principles (“Thou shall...”)
- Too many rules
- Creates a policing & permitting scenario

So, what can be done?

- Checks and Balances Approach
 - Central EA function
 - Architecture Board
 - EA looks out for the overall landscape
 - Solution Architectures within domain (i.e. projects) that looks out for its interests
 - Architecture Review is an EA process with stakeholders beyond architecture
 - Reviews are collaborative intended to influence
 - Does presume that EA does have some authority
 - EA makes recommendations but not decisions

So, what can be done?

- Scenario Planning (Manage Uncertainty)
 - Future is unpredictable so you need to address what types of things may go wrong
 - Encourage robustness by taking into account known uncertainties
- Descriptive Principles

Enterprise Chess “manifesto”

- Scenario planning over fore- and backcasting
- Requirements over principles
- Collaboration over division of labor
- Design skills over design principles
- Structured documentation (models)
- Risk based abstraction

Hurdles

- Board commitment
 - Without the proper support and backing, EA's role will be put up for discussion, not its message.
- Siege Mentality
 - Domains unwilling to collaborate
- Out of Sight – Out of Mind
 - Lack of participation or no seat at the table prevents trust building and influence

Final Thoughts

- Follow-up survey (still to come)
- Lots of positive feedback
- Really good discussions during the phone calls
- 1 hour phone call is quickly filled with discussion
- Suggest 8 callers or less for an interactive discussion
- Majority of document editing occurred during phone calls

Final Thoughts - continued

- Facilitator role: HIGHLY encourage Itana members to volunteer
 - Easy way to become active in Itana
 - Not difficult and a relatively small time commitment
 - Could be more than 1 person
 - Plenty of support from Itana Steering Committee
 - Participants tend to be eager to discuss