

Selling an Idea

This page is an output of the Itana [Spring Face2Face 2016](#) meeting, contributed to the Itana wiki by the meeting attendees.

Definition

Selling the idea is the process of clearly and succinctly explaining a concept or opportunity. The explanation and needs identification are intended to persuade stakeholders. The selling work requires showing stakeholders how implementing the idea/artifact addresses the problem and close the gaps. A key aspect of this is telling a compelling story or using a metaphor that resonates with the targeted audience. At the end of this activity the idea has been sold (or not) and you have support.

If the idea is well defined, relative to audience, and contains explicit next steps regarding investment needed then a decision is more likely.

Note: selling the idea involves spending political capital. This suggests one should prioritize its use. Engaging domain peers in the sale can extend the available capital.

Outputs

- One or more people who understand the idea and understand the vision and are willing partners.

Context

This step comes after the ideation and artifact generation.

Building Relationships

Building Political Capital

Understand the problem space and what you are trying to accomplish

Alignment with Strategy and Efforts

Personal Leadership

Examples

- A project team has decided to take a tactical path that is contrary to strategic objectives. EA needs to sell the project team on taking the strategic, but more difficult path. There may be several independent and related activities and these may have been perceived as strategic, but they are constraining enterprise solutions.
- Through a strategic planning effort, a team has come to consensus on a new direction to take, have produced relevant artifacts, and needs to convince leadership and customers of the merits of this new direction.
- A project team or unit has achieved a major milestone along their strategically aligned roadmap and needs to demonstrate this success to leadership for them to support further investment.
- A client engagement effort is lacking structure and focus. The Business Architect has the belief that incorporating the enterprise capability map in the efforts will help in developing a common business language across the enterprise. By having a common business language IT and business can have more meaningful conversations above the project and technology level.
- To move the organization to be more service owner focused an investment is needed in database access to visualize the relationships between capabilities, services and technology.

Activities

Identify Stakeholders and their role

These are people who need to be persuaded or can help to persuade others.

- Various stakeholder roles include: champion, authority, decision-makers, influencers, implementers, etc.
- The person doing the selling may sometimes best be an influential peer.
- Understand your target audience's motivations and persona
- Determine supporters vs detractors - Stakeholder Analysis is one tool that is helpful

[Architecture Leadership](#) > **Selling an Idea**



Links

- (to be completed)

Contributors

- (to be completed)

- RACI (responsible, accountable, consulted, informed) or one of its variations. Be clear as to who needs to say “yes”
- Determine areas of concern and make key folks from those areas are included (relates to RACI but with a focus on ensuring sufficient perspective)

Related activities

- Identifying (and recruiting) involve Building Relationships

Create Marketing Plan

Target materials for the different stakeholder roles

- Create material for each targeted audience. Techniques may include:
 - Business Case
- Answering 6 interrogatives (who, what, when, where, why, how)
- FAB - Feature, Advantage, Benefit
- Core diagrams and other artifacts already enumerated at the ITANA site.
- Formal communication plan - many orgs have people dedicated to communications who can facilitate and edit

Related Activities

- Plan the meetings
- Manage the meetings

Market the Idea (Persuasion)

Present, promote, market and build value of the idea to stakeholders. This includes addressing questions and concerns The presentation can take multiple forms.

- Presentations, broad or targeted
- Meetings/discussions with various stakeholders
- Written communications (email, whitepaper, etc.)
- Compelling stories and metaphors
- Graphics
- Web/wiki sites
- 1 on 1 interactions with key stakeholders

When applicable, broadly socialize the idea before formally “selling” it, in order to reduce the amount of change people are feeling.

And excellent books on this topic are

- “[Made To Stick](#)” by the Heath Brothers.
- Brief <http://www.amazon.com/Brief-Make-Bigger-Impact-Saying/dp/1118704967>

One best practice is to sell the idea to those making the buying decision individually, addressing their question and concerns, so the final decision making meeting is as close to a rubber stamp approval as possible.

Related Activities

- Plan the meetings
- Manage the meetings

Validate the reception and understanding of the idea

Decision Making (aka- Closing the deal)

Achievement of a ‘Yes’ decision from the Decision Makers identified in the RACI.

Leadership tools that you may need to leverage are:

- Being explicit about the idea that you want people to agree to/accept
- Communicating the business value, outcomes of the idea
- Peer examples of where the idea was useful and the value / outcome
- Respectful listening / active listening in the meetings (“What I hear you saying is...”)
- As a facilitator, reflecting back where you hear agreement.
- Capture agreed to points on flipchart, whiteboard to reinforce the agreement

Methods may include:

- Consensus voting structures (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Consensus_decision-making). E.g. cross business domain decisions where there is no single authority
- Formal ratification document (people and time) and/or verbal agreement in a public setting, such as a meeting depending on the substance of the agreement (e.g. validation vs commitment of time and/or resources)
- Meeting minutes that are distributed to stakeholders is a good tool to reinforce decisions.
- Another tool to reinforce decisions is to publicize the decision and the people who made it (say, but sending a "thank you" email).

Related Skills

(to be completed)

Possible Next Steps

Inspiring Action: Idea has been sold to a specific audience. Implies more selling is required to a different audience