Enterprise Architecture

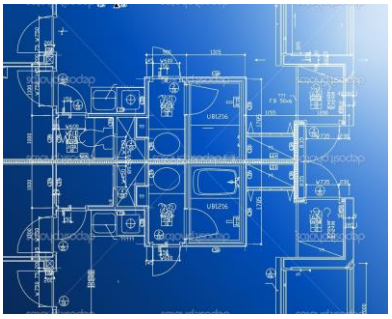
A Framework for Strategic Planning of IT Initiatives

Too many projects, too little time. Every department in the organization comes to IT with requests for databases and applications – that is, when they're not creating a "shadow IT" that uses cloud offerings to meet their needs without using the internal IT group.

Requests are often not prioritized, or follow the "loudest wheel gets the grease" principle rather than a rational process. Systems are duplicated. Information is managed in silos, with multiple versions of customer data, employee data, or product data. Development is contracted to "software factories" that promise high levels of professionalism, but cannot really meet the needs of the business since the deliverable is supposed to support a business process that hasn't been rigorously defined. And this unmaintainable chaos extends to the data center, where new servers are added because of technology choices that were made separately for each system.

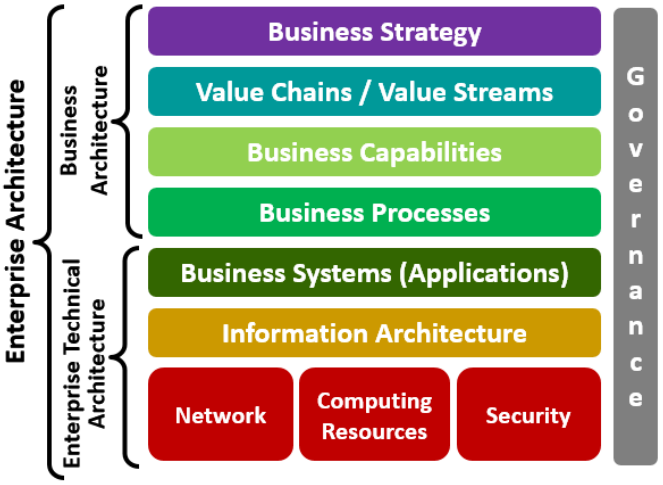
Businesses waste time and money, and miss opportunities, because redundant and conflicting projects are launched without a global view and strategy.

Enterprise architecture (EA) provides a blueprint to resolve these issues, allowing you to build a roadmap for an organization's IT initiatives. Since John Zachman's seminal work at IBM in 1987, various EA frameworks have been proposed and adopted. The best-known is probably TOGAF – The Open Group Architecture Framework. But who can completely apply a methodology that takes 800 pages to describe, and recommends more than 50 artifacts to describe the enterprise's IT landscape?



cébé IT & Knowledge Management proposes and has successfully applied a simplified framework organized in seven layers – plus a cross-cutting governance domain. The main goals and benefits of the framework are:

- It helps identify and classify projects.
- It allows the prioritization of projects according to their relevance to business strategies.
- It helps maintain alignment between the layers and avoid duplications.



This framework is rigorous, faithful to the fundamental ideas behind Zachman and TOGAF, but can be learned and applied by an IT organization to enable strategic IT planning after a few days of training. The top layers – the business architecture – can be understood by the executives and managers who remain responsible for their definition, with IT serving as internal consultant to the business.

We have applied this framework to develop "architecture-based roadmaps" in organizations as diverse as a print advertising company, an agency of the Mexican federal government, and a consumer retail company. By-products of the methodology are better IT sourcing policies, comprehensive information models, master data management, enterprise taxonomies and technology standards.

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