DATA-DRIVEN ENTERPRISE ARCHITECTURE

STA Group’s Enterprise Architects, with decades of experience, are Business-Technologists who understand the language of business and translate its strategic intent into enterprise architecture designs with a unique Data-Driven approach that leads to more effective business transformations and a competitive advantage.

OVERVIEW

The practice of Enterprise Architecture (EA) began as an effective way to develop and execute successfully on an organization’s business and information technology (IT) strategies. All too often, EA’s effectiveness has been called into question, most notably when the realization of the enterprise architecture does not fully support the enablement of leadership’s strategic goals and objectives. The absence of recognizing this critical lapse early on can be traced back to deficiencies in the shared information strategy between the business, IT and EA. A shared information strategy refers to an established approach for continuous collaboration and sharing of related strategic planning information for the purposes of aligning business and IT roadmaps. This situation generally occurs because the business and IT develop their respective strategies separately and often not with the same working knowledge of the business’s comprehensive goals, objectives and issues.

Addressing this issue requires a different approach, one of which brings the business, IT and EA together in a single and continuous collaboration of strategy development and execution. This approach delivers what STA Group calls Enterprise Strategy. Enterprise Strategy encompasses and intertwines business and IT strategy to help businesses comprehend and influence their decisions. The key to the enablement of STA Group’s approach to Enterprise Strategy is the incorporation of analytics in the interpretation and gaining of insights into various decision made by business and IT.

THE CURRENT APPROACH / TODAY’S CHALLENGE

Shared information strategy properly aligned to a common business and technology context is critical in the development, execution and realization of business and IT strategies. In today’s organizations, large volumes of sharable information are being made available through various internal/external sources but aren’t integrated with other business areas. This information is collected and/or stewarded by multiple business and IT areas, enabling its availability but not necessarily its integration with other business areas. This approach has an insidious impact on a company’s operations and the perceived value of its business and IT architectures.

Often enterprise architects, their sponsors, and stakeholders make architecture related decisions based on “siloed” information which is created and/or collected throughout the organization. This critical lapse yields sub-optimal architecture decisions and a shortage of strategic clarity. This in turn produces subjective interpretations of business intent and technology needs that leads to costly rework and creates barriers to leveraging emerging technology. Taken collectively, these issues introduce the risk of the business losing out on opportunities in the market place.
The key to the enablement of STA Group’s approach to Enterprise Strategy is the incorporation of intertwines business and IT strategy to help businesses comprehend and influence their decisions. This approach delivers what STA Group calls 'the same working knowledge of the business’s comprehensive goals, objectives and issues. It produces subjective interpretations of business intent and technology needs that leads to costly critical lapse yields sub-optimal architecture decisions and a shortage of strategic clarity. This in turn based on "siloed" information which is created and/or collected throughout the organization. Often enterprise architects, their sponsors, and stakeholders make architecture related decisions based on ‘gut’ or ‘whispers’, and not on a comprehensive and consistent information strategy. This approach has an insidious impact on a company’s integration with other business areas. This approach has an insidious impact on a company’s stewarded by multiple business and IT areas, enabling its availability but not necessarily its large volumes of sharable information are being made available through various internal/external connections and partnerships.

EA’s effectiveness has been called into question, most notably when the realization of the enterprise architecture’s goals and objectives are to be realized. The practice of Enterprise Architecture (EA) began as an effective way to develop and execute strategies between the business, IT and EA. A shared information strategy refers to an approach of properly aligned to a common business and technology context is critical for the purposes of aligning business and IT roadmaps. This situation generally occurs because the business and IT develop their respective strategies separately and often not with the information for the purposes of aligning business and IT roadmaps. The Enterprise Architecture practice at STA Group brings decades of experience in leading business transformation efforts through incorporating the latest trends in technology and translating strategic analytics capability is required to quickly mine patterns across structured and unstructured data to useful patterns and co-relations that can be leveraged for building an enterprise strategy and its development. STA Group’s reputation for solving difficult business and IT architectures.

Despite these shortfalls, Enterprise Architecture’s role remains to coalesce the gaps between C-level executives and their business/technology strategists to derive more competitive and unique decisions, goals and objectives. Given the exponential growth of data inside today’s organizations EA’s task of continuously mending these disconnects becomes increasingly more difficult. Today’s fast-paced, technology-driven environments are already exposing these limits and creating a new set of challenges for business and IT.

**Figure-1** shows the typical approach an organization uses to develop their enterprise architecture. C-Level executives provide the ultimate direction for their organization. Their decisions are documented and communicated to their senior leadership team, who in-turn define how their respective business areas need to change in order for the business strategy’s goals and objectives are to be realized.

1. C-Level executives and senior leadership defines one or more business strategies based on the goals and desired outcomes for their business units
2. Senior IT leadership defines their strategy based on the perceived business and IT needs along with their technology evolution roadmap.
3. Decisions by senior IT leadership feed into the overall IT Strategy
4. Enterprise Architecture is responsible for understanding the business strategy and translating it into an IT strategy through the use of architectural principles, models, roadmaps, and investment decisions.

There are several shortfalls with this approach:

1. The interpretation of strategic information provided by C-level executives is not similarly understood by individual business units.
2. Individual business units will tend to translate the C-level strategy so that it best benefits the development of their unit-level business plans. On their own, these unit plans may represent an appropriate direction for the business units. But, when these business unit plans are aligned collectively, they rarely embody a consistent business or technology direction.
3. The decisions made by senior leadership are often consumed and acted upon by individual business areas. This is done before they can be aligned and designed into a holistic strategy with supporting business and IT architectures. Aside from being labor-intensive, this effort inherently leads to subjective interpretations of strategic direction and intent. This deteriorates the quality and accuracy of shared information strategy resulting in misaligned and consequently dysfunctional business and IT architectures.
4. The corresponding IT strategy can and often is defined separately from business. The scope of IT strategies can differ from the business strategy and may not include longer term technology roadmaps. When these roadmaps do not take advantage of longer term business or IT strategy, they constrain the business from taking advantage of opportunities involving new technology.

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STA GROUP’S APPROACH

Resolving the gaps that emerge between C-level executives and the business unit strategies requires an approach that enables a common and informed vision. Our approach for empowering this vision is centered on the development of a common enterprise strategy supported by STA Group’s unique approach of Data-Driven Enterprise Architecture.

As copious volumes of data are created and collected, it becomes increasingly difficult for organization’s to mine, extract and correlate insightful information. This impacts the ability to find useful patterns and co-relations that can be leveraged for building an enterprise strategy and its corresponding business and technology architectures. To counter such challenges, a unique data and analytics capability is required to quickly mine patterns across structured and unstructured data to identify and provide relevant insights to properly align the business and technology architectures. Data-Driven Enterprise Architecture addresses this problem by driving the expedient resolution of business and technology gaps to accurately define business goals allowing more effective prioritization, organization and execution of downstream initiatives, programs, and projects.

Figure-2 illustrates STA Group’s Approach to Data-Driven enterprise architecture:

- C-Level executives, senior leadership and IT contribute to one Enterprise Strategy.
- Large amounts of data are created by various methods, including; enterprise applications, email, chat, text documents, phone transcriptions, social media, diagrams, etc. This data is being stored in various repositories, such as: SharePoint, email servers, architecture repositories, etc.
- Data mining and analytics are used to provide insights, populate executive dashboards and reports that enhance Enterprise Architecture’s ability to make accurate business & technology architecture decisions.
- Outputs of business and technology architectures deliver accurate alignment to business needs and provide recommended integration to other key organizational initiatives.

Data-Driven Enterprise Architecture provides the following advantages:

- Reduction of subjectivity in architecture designs and interpretation
- Accurate reflections of the business intent within the technology architecture
- Increased efficiency, cost reductions and enhanced customer experience
- Development of a competitive advantage through incorporation of emerging technologies

The Enterprise Architecture practice at STA Group brings decades of experience in leading business transformation efforts through incorporating the latest trends in technology and translating strategic intent into effective and valuable enterprise architecture designs. STA provides the competitive advantage companies need to succeed.

Whether your organizations challenges stem from strategy-to-technology misalignment, shortage of development from emerging technology or under performance of higher level of efficiency, STA Group offers the direction and solutions to help. STA Group’s reputation for solving difficult business and technology problems is rooted in determining the true business need, designing architectural designs and the delivery of pragmatic and compelling solutions that reinforce the business strategy.