



Carval Swaby YOU
 Strategy, Enterprise
 Architecture, BPM Consultant
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Crowdsourcing Enterprise Architecture Work

Enterprise Architecture (EA) work is complex and can be quite challenging. The challenges are increasing as businesses are now demanding real, tangible value contribution of EA to its overall sustainability and viability, especially in these harsh economic times. In addition, EA complexity is driven by the many moving parts (e.g. stakeholders viewpoints and concerns) that have to be kept in balance to ensure enterprise stability is maintained at all times.

One new business demand is that EA must be able to predict or be able to respond quickly to the ever-changing challenges that the business faces. These challenges may be driven by external influences such as 1) changes in customer behavior, 2) market competition, 3) technology improvement or innovation, 4) social/cultural shifts -- e.g. increasing use of social platforms like Facebook and Twitter as primary channels for communication and collaboration, and so on. There are also internal influences that may require rapid response and adaptation of the EA -- for example, a sudden change in business strategy, drastic cost cutting measures, change in business model, and so on. With all these balls to juggle, one can reasonably say the job of the Enterprise Architect is definitely a daunting one.

So here is the challenge question: What are some of the solution options that may help make the enterprise architect work much easier, simpler, and cheaper to get done? Direct EA Consultant services are excluded! I'm really looking for radical/innovative solution options... possibly something that could spark a new service market.

For starters, how about crowdsourcing EA work? Do you think this would be feasible? If so, how could it be done? I'm tossing this idea out there based on current trends in the Web 2.0 / Web 3.0 space.

Your feedback/comments/thoughts are most appreciated.

Posted 9 months ago |

Comments (43)



Michael Poulin
 Head of Business and
 Technology Architecture at
 BuTechCon Ltd.
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Amazing! Crowdsourcing an Enterprise Architecture sounds to me similar to the idea of outsourcing American pensions to Taliban for maintenance.

From given description, I have noticed that the majority of business tasks appear as they are dropping 'from the blue' onto the Enterprise Architect head. I do agree with Carval - "the job of the Enterprise Architect is definitely a daunting one" in such conditions.

As a matter of fact, real Enterprise Architect job must have nothing to do with waiting for what business needs. This job has to tell business what it needs, why, and when.

If business keeps Enterprise Architecture a) in isolation, and b) in IT - this is the problem. According to TOGAF, EA=Business EA + IT EA. This is what should be fixed first.

None of the listed external challenges come instantly. As of internal changes such as "sudden change in business strategy, drastic cost cutting measures, change in business model", it is hard to believe that change in business strategy, or drastic cost cutting, or change in business model can happen suddenly; all of them take months to business to prepare related actions. If your Business doesn't trust its own EA, no crowd can help such EA; EA must fix this situation by itself.

Posted 9 months ago |



Badar Munir
 Chief Architect, i3
 Technologies
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Great response Michael.

For starters, we Americans have lost trust in our Congress which, over the decades, has badly mismanaged Social Security by transferring money to other government initiatives. The crime deserves severe punishment to the responsible for turning social security into a ponzy scheme. So then why to worry about outsourcing this job to CIA and America's old friends called 'Taliban' when it's in-sourcing to US Congress has already been so damn distasteful resulting it

to become almost worthless for future generations it seems.

Coming back to EA, it seems we still have some ways to go in developing an understanding that EA should first be integrated to Business Strategy before any reasonable benefits can be expected. I must say that TOGAF took the lead in crowd sourcing this awareness. But EA space is still too restricted to IT only. For EA to come out of IT's domain remains a daunting challenge and absolute necessity.

Badar

Posted 9 months ago |



Michael Poulin

Head of Business and Technology Architecture at BuTechCon Ltd.

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Agree, Badar. I am American also...

IMO, one of the ways for EA exposure onto Business is creation of Business Architect category, in Business but under EA umbrella

Posted 9 months ago |



Badar Munir

Chief Architect, i3 Technologies

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I completely agree with you Mark. Thanks for adding it up.

It was ok for EA to take a start from IT what Jack 'Zachman correctly did. However, now EA should be an independant business unit reporting to COO preferably.

Business Architecture, correctly, should be the core focus of EA group since that's how an EA can help enterprise's business operations and different initiatives. Business Strategy thus becomes EA or BA's client.

Posted 9 months ago |



JP Morgenthal

Chief Architect at Merlin International

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Michael, you can be so caustic sometimes.

Carval, I commend you for trying to think out of the box, but intimacy with the business and its processes is required for effective EA work. Unless you're crowdsourcing within the organization you are doing the EA for, it's most likely not going to yield you anything more than an academic approach.

Posted 9 months ago |



Michael Poulin

Head of Business and Technology Architecture at BuTechCon Ltd.

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Yes, JP,I know this sin of mine. Sorry, Carval.

Posted 9 months ago |



Joshua Elson

Enterprise Architect at Catholic Health Initiatives

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"As a matter of fact, real Enterprise Architect job must have nothing to do with waiting for what business needs. This job has to tell business what it needs, why, and when."

I think you quickly end up in dangerous territory when you start making these kinds of statements in broad sweeping language. When it comes to the technical domain, there's no doubt that EA should be driving the needs discussion. At higher level of the business architecture, you're going to do a whole lot more listening and less commanding, in my experience at least.

I'll echo the notion that EA should be, at least in part, outside the IT organization and probably be represented at the C level in many cases. I've even seen split models where EA is kept in house while operational aspects of the environment are outsourced. This can be a nifty way to align incentives and reduce turf battles and providing a check to the outsourcer.

I'll agree with JP and the rest that crowdsourcing is going to be tough, depending on how the company views EA structurally. That said, some of the tools used in crowdsourcing can be helpful in clarifying EA and getting input from a wide variety of sources. I've used wikis and private Twitter-type social networking to cast a wide net for narrow targeted questions across the set of architecture domains.

Posted 9 months ago |

Carval -

**Aleks Buterman**

Tech-Savvy Business Leader and Technology Investment Management Adviser
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It's an intriguing thought, but "I am a leaf on the wind" approach to technology strategy and planning is unlikely to work or sell. As with all sourcing, it's easy to smart-source commodity products and services. When you get to non-commodity things like strategy & planning, it is people who are basis of competitive advantage. Smart business strategy would be not to tick those people off. Now, if you find an outside group that can act as a trusted adviser, has the resources that you cannot or are not willing to attract on a full time basis, and is willing to take on the fiduciary duty (akin to a financial adviser) for their advice, then smart-sourcing EA could (and has) worked.

That last bit is important, as w/o it too many consultancies in EA space can simply trot in recent graduates who know little of Enterprise or Architecture with impunity. Perhaps that is the innovation we're looking for in this space. If EAs (or any other brave souls in IT) are going to give advice on multi-million (and sometimes billion) dollar annual technology investment, why shouldn't they be held to same standards as CFA/CFP's?

Hope that helps,

Aleks

P.S. Ideally, the EA group should NOT report to COO or anyone who is focused on operational responsibilities. That could be (and often is) a conflict of interest with the strategy & planning portion of EA.

Posted 9 months ago |

Mark Brady

Enterprise and Data Architect at Constellation Energy
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@ Michael Poulin said, "None of the listed external challenges come instantly. "

You must not have been in the trading world this last August. Back when businesses, think Lehman Brother, which are too big to fail began to fail... things happen very fast. Look at our fall concurrent to that bankruptcy.

<http://tinyurl.com/cegfall>

Posted 9 months ago |

**Tim Stevens**

Software Consultant, Contributing Editor at Engadget, Freelance Writer
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That's funny, I didn't know the Taliban was into tech-related consulting. You learn something new every day.

Anyhow, I fairly recently worked at a place that did crowd-sourced "architecture," but I think most of you would think of it as high-level design. I do think it's possible to crowdsource software design and do so quite effectively, as the role of the architect can be more focused on meeting the need of the business at large.

But ultimately architecture is a much larger thing than making widgets that fit together, tasks like ensuring homogeneous system implementations and providing long-term technical direction... plus all the political games that must be played.

So, I'd say yes, you can crowd-source some of the easier but often time-consuming stuff, but not so easily the harder, "vision" related tasks.

Posted 9 months ago |

**Michael Poulin**

Head of Business and Technology Architecture at BuTechCon Ltd.
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In response to the Joshua's post:

If your are an IT EA in IT, you are talking to managers what and why they need to do. If your are an IT EA in Business, you just listen. The reversed picture for Business Architects - they tell business managers what to do and why, and listen to to IT.

I am promoting an idea that EA Business Architects (as well as EA technical Architects) have to work for cross-functional cross-department management; if it is COO, I do not know. In this context, it is the Business Architect tells the Business Department Managers what business services have to be ready and when. I know, this sounds unrealistic but in some successful companies this has started to happen.

In response to the Aleks' post:

Agree. Especially about COO. Moreover, architecture, by definition, is not about operations and processes, it is about entity goals, ins/outs and relationships between aimed entities. Goals move architecture from state to state, relationships stabilize each state before next move.

In response to the Mark's post:

You are right, I was not in the trading world already when Lehman Brother

collapsed. Nonetheless, we are talking about EA in not failing (yet) organisation. For such case, a change in a business model is next to revolution in the company, massive layoff - the same as well as a change in the business strategy. These things may be sudden to only isolated IT and, if EA is in IT only, to the EA.

This is why I am saying that EA must be across the organisation, in the business and IT parts together.

Posted 9 months ago |



Frederick Lange

Data Architecture Consultant
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Back to the crowdsourcing idea.

The first thing I'm wondering is "Who is the crowd?"

If it is everyone in the world, including the Taliban, then not good. If it is everyone in a far flung enterprise, and everyone in the enterprise is wired to Web 2.0, and enterprise goals and strategies are effectively disseminated, then very good. It seems like a tremendous way to get more people involved in the EA and to make the EA a true reflection of how the enterprise wants to work.

Note, setting enterprise goals and strategies remains the purview of top executives.

Posted 9 months ago |



Joshua Elson

Enterprise Architect at Catholic Health Initiatives
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@Michael: I would be very interested to see more detail on successful companies using a model like the one you describe. It's definitely out there in terms of most architecture philosophies I've seen. It's theoretically attractive to me, though it's the EA equivalent of "when all you have is a hammer, every problem looks like a nail." Where does corporate governance happen? What kind of people are in a Business Architecture role? Where are feedback loops into strategy and back from operations to EA?

@Frederick: I think the critical distinction is in what you're trying to do. Properly bounded, Web 2.0 practices can shorten innovation cycles and improve communication. But again, you're producing unstructured collective intelligence. EA frameworks rely in a structured approach that's not a direct output from any Web 2.0 technique I've seen.

Posted 9 months ago |



Frederick Lange

Data Architecture Consultant
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Joshua,

When Web 2.0 practices can directly produce EA artifacts, we architects won't have much to do. I don't see introducing crowdsourcing as changing much what we already should be doing--stimulating and leading discussion, articulating conclusions with high pictorial content so both business and technical constituents equally understand and agree, incorporating the conclusions into viable business led governance.

Posted 9 months ago |

Roger Reynolds

Global Manager Security Engineering / Firewall Engineering, Firewall Operations
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Crowd Sourcing effectiveness is likely going to be proportional to the competency of the participants and the context - potentially effective in scenarios such as identifying possible solution sets, but hard to see how this is as effective in macro and micro design of the solutions themselves. I can see how this works well in a commoditized environments for sub assemblies of architectural patterns, but struggle to see how agility and accuracy would be realized in non-commodity pattern environments.

There is simply no substitute for enterprise architects to be directly involved in business development and pipeline opportunities.

Waiting for the business to come to the doorstep of IT is a recipe for dissatisfaction in terms of agility, cost, and elapsed time to delivery of a solution.

One paradigm worth re-examining is the mantra of consistency of an enterprise architecture vision - we self reinforce consistency, scalability, and stability -- usually don't won't see these used in the same sentence as rapid, agile, and cost efficient.

Many Internet startup type companies use architecture as an ephemeral, evolving framework to bootstrap to the 'next big thing' as their company grows. You don't normally hear the concerns about EA in these environments.

Posted 9 months ago |

This comment has been deleted.



Scott Palmer

Executive Director at Value Chain Group, Inc.

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Hiccup. Great thread!

The not for profit I represent is on a cutting edge path to help companies find coherence between strategy, business architecture and enterprise architecture.

Key to our approach is to transform a company from a paper based enterprise to a model based enterprise. We show stakeholders how to build consensus around their captured paper based processes and create a process database for building and maintaining acceptable business architectures.

We demonstrate how the framework can be utilized to create a system functions dictionary and IT blueprints that align with the business.

In an ongoing (educational) engagement we are helping a major manufacturer's global EA solutions group to align their already captured IT architecture (via MEGA) with their processes using the Value Reference Model on a high level basis and extending this into a hired consultancy's proprietary industry specific reference model all within one framework. It is very elegant work.

With the right tools/applications (many exist), the right semantic process framework, the right methodology and the right people, it is possible to achieve an absolute and successful architectural gestalt.

BTW, Carval, we have a nice case example with Product Development processes done over a three week span (a few years ago) at Chrysler Development Systems.

Posted 9 months ago |



Carval Swaby YOU

Strategy, Enterprise Architecture, BPM Consultant

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@All:

This topic seems to have sparked some interesting responses... some strangely amusing and others, well, quite on point. I'll attempt to provide more clarity on what my thoughts are when I speak of crowdsourcing EA work.

First, crowdsourcing IMHO is not technically the same as outsourcing. The similarity lies in offloading work/job tasks to a third-party to complete. However, as to how this is done is where the differences lie. Crowdsourcing is about leveraging the collective intelligence of an open community to solve a specific problem, typically a complex or challenging one. Does EA work fit this profile?

As the saying goes, two heads are better than one, and sometimes joining forces to tackle a single problem might be a better approach for the common good -- case in point: TOGAF, UML, etc. But what if thousands of "two or more heads" working independently to come up with different "fully completed" solutions to a single, possibly unique, business problem? You could then have multiple "fully completed" solution choices to choose from. This is quite unconventional to what we have become accustomed.

Business Context: Most businesses want to be unique in their offerings and processes -- that's what gives them a competitive advantage. Can this competitive advantage come at a cheaper price tag, leveraging possibly some of the best resources outside the corporate walls? Could crowdsourcing fit the bill here? This just might be possible given the Web 2.0 / Web 3.0 wave that we are in.

EA Context: As I had said, EA is complex, it's multi-dimensional, and it requires individuals with multi-disciplines -- which most enterprise architects are not, however hard we try. In some cases it might make sense to look at crowdsourcing as an option to address some of the architect's skills or knowledge deficiencies. For example, EA in practice has been struggling with issues like marketing/selling, demonstrable value proposition, value measurement, execution, etc. in spite of having excellent frameworks and defined practices. The challenge now is finding creative ways to truly deliver on what we claim EA has to offer, and by crowdsourcing some of the EA tasks might just be a viable option.

In closing I must say that like everything in business there are associated risks, and crowdsourcing, being no silver bullet, has its fair share of risks. The trick lies in how best we can leverage from what's evolving around us to derive some tangible returns.

Some useful information sources...

1. Wikipedia: Definition/explanation/examples of Crowdsourcing:

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crowdsourcing>

2. Book: The Wisdom of the Crowds, by James Surowiecki

Posted 9 months ago |



Scott Palmer

Executive Director at Value Chain Group, Inc.

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@Carval:

Appreciate the references. Will look them up and study over my vacation next week on Cape Cod. Where I also plan on doing some serious scrodsourcing.... ;-)

Posted 9 months ago |

Mark Brady

Enterprise and Data Architect at Constellation Energy

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"Crowdsourcing is about leveraging the collective intelligence of an open community to solve a specific problem, typically a complex or challenging one. Does EA work fit this profile? "

I say no. If you look at TopCoder, they break a project into individual classes or modules and run contests on the internet to provide the crowd a chance to solve that one piece. But who breaks it down into the pieces? A TopCoder "architect". So it looks like crowdsorce, but the architecture is just outsourced. He spends as much or more time learning your requirements than an internal Architect would. Now that's App Arch, but I think the analogy holds true to EA.

If you can break your EA up into "quanta" of effort, that have very confined and well-defined parameters, you could get people to do that effort... what that leaves you with is the work of threshing the EA wheat from the chaff.

Posted 9 months ago |



Michael Poulin

Head of Business and Technology Architecture at BuTechCon Ltd.

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I join Mark in this.

As the saying goes, two heads are better than one. The second part of the saying is: but three heads is worth than two if the third head is not one of existing two.

I would say NO to crowdsourcing of Enterprise Architecture in both Business and Architecture contexts. A few of my reasons to this answer were articulated in this discussion already. Here is a short summary:

1) if one problem in EA requires wide brainstorming, it is OK to involve other experts (than EA architects); if every problem in EA requires wide brainstorming, the EA stuff better be fired

2) uniqueness of corporate business requires certain level of confidentiality, especially in solving enterprise-level tasks. That is, no crowds are welcome. This is true for private and public business (I worked in both and can tell you that really good solutions were always created in small teams rather than in the open parliamentary bazar discussions where everybody is interested in his/her agenda)

3) This point is derived from 2. To make really good architectural solution, it is required having right level of qualification and responsibilities. Both conditions are not attributes of open crowd.

4) A crown cannot decide what company needs indeed. Example: meeting investors with corporate management; the meeting results do not always help company's prosperity (but rather liquidity)

5) EA work differs from the designer work in that EA must consider not only solution elegance but value for money in both tactical and strategic aspects. It is too risky to expect that collective mind would adhere to these constraints all the time.

Finally, "EA in practice has been struggling with issues like marketing/selling, demonstrable value proposition, value measurement, execution, etc. in spite of having excellent frameworks and defined practices. The challenge now is finding creative ways to truly deliver on what we claim EA has to offer, and by scrowdsourcing some of the EA tasks might just be a viable option." – I know this situation very well, we all do.

My painful experience says that solution here is in the business networking, in saying right words to right business people in right place, not in the crowd chorus. The obstacles on the EA way are also known: mismatch to business goals and objectives, conflict of business interests between the business target of EA value proposition and decision making business unit.

The creative way for EA that I see is a bit more complex than crowdsourcing. The way is in making EA a corporate-wide entity, across Business and Technology under cross-divisional and cross-functional management, with significant authority over technical AND business management. Not more but not less. As Einstein said "do not make things simpler than they are".

Posted 9 months ago |



Joshua Elson

Enterprise Architect at Catholic Health Initiatives
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I am more sympathetic to the notion that some business context discussions could be crowdsourced in an effective way than anything in the technical domains might be. I'd tend to agree with Mark that the architectural superstructure needs to be in place before we start talking about efficiency within that context.

To move to the concrete (literally) for a moment, could you crowdsource the architecture of a skyscraper? Of a downtown city grid? I'm not confident the answer is yes. I'm also not willing to fully rule it out, but a new set of tools may be needed.

I did read Surowiecki's book and found it to be a good read, though inconclusive. The opposite perspective is also worth considering. Any reader of Edge.org will remember a very potent critique of the "crowd" in Jaron Lanier's article entitled Digital Maoism. I'd suggest it - at minimum it's thought provoking and well written:

http://www.edge.org/3rd_culture/lanier06/lanier06_index.html

Posted 9 months ago |



Frederick Lange

Data Architecture Consultant
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Joshua,

If you mean the citizens of a city are the crowd, crowdsourcing a skyscraper--no. But crowdsourcing the city grid--yes. In fact, most city planning efforts these days are extensively crowdsourced the old fashioned, the pre-Web 2.0 way, with community forums and meetings for citizen "input".

Posted 9 months ago |



Colin Smart

Manager at Deloitte
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It is refreshing to see such a motivated group (crowd?).

In general, I'm with Michael. However, there are aspects of EA work that might be workable through crowdsourcing. The one that springs to mind is the creation of policy to underpin the governance process. Here the problem is relatively contained, but there are still multiple stakeholders and viewpoints.

A "seed" policy is made available for the crowd to assess, alter, promote etc. - I really need to read a book on crowd sourcing - and a consensus grows. Sometimes the consensus is that the policy isn't needed.

The fact that many people contribute gives them all a stake in the answer and this helps with the adoption of policy.

This model, and the examples of crowdsourcing that have been mentioned, all have a degree of waste about them. Multiple options are created and only one is selected. While this model is common in RFI/RFP worlds, I think that there would be a limit to the amount of effort any individual/organisation would entertain without reward (status, cash...)

Posted 9 months ago |



Michael Poulin

Head of Business and Technology Architecture at BuTechCon Ltd.
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Hi Colin, good to see you here!

I curious whether term "crowdsourcing" is just a new name for very old things (as usual)? It is a normal and common practice for EA or any other A to collect requirements from quite wide audience and then, when solution is formed promote it or 'sell' to community. To my understanding, this is what Colin mean by a 'seed' policy or whatever 'seed'. In the contrast, Carval asks for a crowdsourcing style of doing EA job on a 'permanent' basis.

As of governing policies, I led such movement in a big company with regard to re-positioning and re-defining SOA as EA methodology. The value of selling off and consensus is very high but... governing policies cannot satisfy all and 'consensus' gets reached in a screwed form of 'expert concilium' because opinions of higher ranked people influence others.

So, there are two types of policy formulation: 1) a policy is formulated by a Working Group based on gathered requirements and then 'seeded' for discussions; 2) a suggestion for a policy and its content are formulated outside of

the Working Group and, after binding proposed policy with other policies, it is 'seeded' for discussions. Does the second case constitute crowdsourcing?

Posted 9 months ago |



Carval Swaby (YOU)
Strategy, Enterprise
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@All:

Great discussion! It's a bit ironic, but we are all caught in the act of crowdsourcing right now -- that is, we are contributing to the problem of whether aspects of EA work could/should be crowdsourced. The various comments we have all posted are possible solution options (or snippets of solution options) for what I might be after. Is this "head fake" or what? Remarkably amazing!

Moving on... given what I've learned so far, here are a few principles or posits to put things in realistic context:

1. Crowdsourcing your entire EA job function or work tasks is a BIG NO-NO. This is a no-brainer as the EA is a manifestation of your business strategy, something you keep closely guarded and don't disclosed outside the corporate walls.
2. Crowdsourcing aspects of your EA work SHOULD ONLY BE CONSIDERED after your EA execution/management plan has been crafted. This make sense since at this point you would have had the EA decomposed into workable/manageable segments (think WBS in Project Management, for example).
3. Crowdsourcing any strategic tasks/activities/artifacts/etc. outside the corporate walls is STRICTLY FORBIDDEN. Your various strategies -- e.g. IT, EA, Business, etc. -- are what differentiates the business to give it that competitive advantage.
4. Crowdsourcing outside the corporate walls must only be done for COMMODITIZED TASKS that contribute in delivering business benefits quickly, at the lowest possible cost, and within a given timeframe.

That's that... the ground rules are now set... lets march on.

=====

@Michael:

I'll take a point you made earlier and use it to illustrate whether or not crowdsourcing could be relevant to your problem context.

So if I understand your point correctly, you are proposing organizational, political, and empowerment changes within the EA discipline as redress measures to overcome challenges faced by EA practitioners. [Side note: IMHO the redress measures are really cross-cutting concerns -- i.e. they cut across (or are present in) multiple segments/viewpoints of the EA... a few key ones being business, technology, information, people, processes, etc.]

Moving on... let's assume the above understanding is correct.

Now, the IMPLEMENTATION of what you have proposed will constitute a new problem which will also require a solution -- a solution that could mean acquiring other resources (e.g. skills) and know-how (e.g. knowledge) of how to get the job done most effectively, given some predefined constraints. Being an enterprise architect, I'm assuming you would be carrying out the necessary due diligence of...

1. conducting some analysis,
2. crafting a solution blueprint,
3. validating the blueprint to ensure it addresses the concerns of key stakeholders,
4. selling/marketing the blueprint to stakeholders,
5. developing the implementation plan,
6. performing decomposition of the work tasks/activities involved,
7. acquiring relevant resources and work material
7. etc. etc. etc.

Guided by the principles I've outlined earlier, of the above activities/tasks/artifacts, could anyone of them -- wholly or in part -- be tender out for possible crowdsourcing?

It's possible that your answer could be slanted towards what has been commonly practiced -- namely, keeping "everything EA" inside the corporate walls. The important thing to keep in mind is the constraints of the business -- e.g. quick results, low funds, limited resources, skill/knowledge gaps, etc.

Yes, EA work can be really complex!

Posted 9 months ago |



Tony Caink

PM / Architect for Transend Networks

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Hey I crowdsource every time I come onto LinkedIn looking for advice on specific issues. And every time I google or read a book. Its a very rare Architectural problem that doesn't benefit from a pattern or past experience.

Posted 9 months ago |



Colin Smart

Manager at Deloitte

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I may be splitting hairs here (what else do architects do?) but I would differentiate between research, and crowdsourcing.

In research, I'm consulting a body of work published prior to my engagement to satisfy some requirement/desire of the author. So, books, google etc are all research. In effect static retrieval and adds little/nothing to the sum total of knowledge.

In crowdsourcing, I'm going to the crowd with a question/activity in the hope that one, or more, people/groups within the crowd are prepared to help in the hope of some reward. The help may, of course, be a pointer to research. A more dynamic activity that codifies knowledge through association.

As crowdsourcing has strong links to the economics of abundance, I don't see it as an avenue for a new service market other than, perhaps, in facilitation (e.g. LinkedIn.com)

Posted 9 months ago |

Mark Brady

Enterprise and Data Architect at Constellation Energy

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@Colin,

Are you equating nntp/newsgroups /linked-in /Yahoo! Answers /Mahalo /StackOverflow.com with crowdsourcing?

If so, I can't believe that I've been crowdsourcing for 20 years and didn't know it. :-)

Getting answer from a bulletin board or newsgroup or stackoverflow.com doesn't seem like crowdsourcing, to me. I picture TopCoder as the canonical crowdsourced model.

Posted 9 months ago |



Colin Smart

Manager at Deloitte

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@Mark,

I was trying to differentiate between using existing published information, (reading a news group) and asking a question which others then answer (writing to a newsgroup).

I don't see the difference between the latter and crowdsourcing.

The model is not new, what's changed is the cost to reach a large enough community.

It could be argued that "crowdsourcing" has a long tradition, from Wild West "Wanted" posters, to the "Longitude Prize" of 1759.

Posted 9 months ago |



Michael Poulin

Head of Business and Technology Architecture at BuTechCon Ltd.

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Why we try to re-name educations and advisory by 'crowdsourcing'? I think, it is not a big difference asking a question to people or searching for the answer by yourself.

I read 'crowdsourcing' as a delegation of a part of your work/job to a community, like a creation of Web content by the Web readers in the Forum - the WebMaster or anybody does not authorise it, this is the 'crowdsourcing'.

For EA, for example, a 'crowdsourcing' may be in this case: EA is responsible for validating all open-source code against, let say, security wholes, but does not have enough time and resources. The EA asks other developers in the company to look into the code and report all security related findings. Then the reports are summarised and used for EA decision whether this open-source product may be used in the corporate development.

Any thoughts?

Posted 9 months ago |



Carval Swaby (YOU)
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@Tony:

Applying crowdsourcing to EA development/management activities would be something new and/or innovative; we therefore would not have the luxury of leveraging from past experience or patterns. It's the feasibility of this whole thought that is being questioned here... at least this is my intent.

Now, if the feasibility is found to be remotely possible and folks decides to put the right mechanisms in place to make it work, then it could disrupt the current EA ecosystem from a task/work execution standpoint.

Posted 9 months ago |



Carval Swaby (YOU)
Strategy, Enterprise
Architecture, BPM Consultant
[See all Carval's activity »](#)

@Colin:

The simple act of pitching a question to the crowd (i.e. community) -- obviously with the intent of getting one or more answers, and possibly paying some reward for this if the answers are useful -- is, in my opinion, a form of crowdsourcing. Reason: You are asking the crowd to solve a problem -- for example, lack of information, lack of knowledge, or lack of resources on your part.

You are basically using the crowd to do work for you -- i.e. to do the necessary detail research or investigation to come up with answers, good or bad. In some cases the answers you seek are already available and neatly packaged, as some in the crowd might have already addressed your specific question.

Now apply this same approach to a business problem [question] -- one that is complex and/or unique and which could yield one or more possible solutions [answers] from the crowd. This is the crowdsourcing context I'm focused on, but mainly relating to EA work tasks/activities.

Posted 9 months ago |



Carval Swaby (YOU)
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@Mark:

I agree with your point. To add to what I've outlined to Colin, in the case of research work, mechanisms like search engines, group forums, books, articles, etc. do simplify the answer-seeking process. However, in this case the answer-seeker would be getting readily available, pre-packaged answer(s) which might just satisfy his/her needs. Obviously this would not be classify as crowdsourcing but more like traditional information sourcing or research as we know it.

Posted 9 months ago |



Carval Swaby (YOU)
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@Michael:

a) You wrote:

"I read 'crowdsourcing' as a delegation of a part of your work/job to a community, like a creation of Web content by the Web readers in the Forum - the WebMaster or anybody does not authorize it, this is the 'crowdsourcing'."

Yes, this is one type of crowdsourcing -- a good example is Wikipedi.com. The only nuance here is that...

1. the crowd is not incentivized by money (maybe they are mainly from academia!)
2. each member of the crowd work on or contribute towards one thing in a coordinated, collaborative fashion

In another type of crowdsourcing, the one that I'm thinking of...

1. the crowd is incentivized by money (a popular crowd pleaser!)
2. crowd members work independently to come up with their own independent solutions -- not necessarily in a collaborative fashion

b) You wrote:

"For EA, for example, a 'crowdsourcing' may be in this case: EA is responsible for validating all open-source code against, let say, security holes, but does not have enough time and resources. The EA asks other developers in the company to look into the code and report all security related findings. Then the reports are summarized and used for EA decision whether this open-source product may be used in the corporate development."

Yes, this is an excellent example of leveraging crowdsourcing for non-strategic tasks/activities on the IT (governance) side of EA (i.e. IT EA). The only pointer I would add is that I would probably use an external crowd for such a task since 1) it seems low risks, 2) the crowd might have experts who are far more optimized in doing source code security vulnerability assessment. Great example!

Can you think of similar examples on the business side of EA (i.e. Biz EA)?

Posted 9 months ago |



Michael Poulin

Head of Business and Technology Architecture at BuTechCon Ltd.

[See all Michael's activity »](#)
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@Carval

I agree that expertise in the subject is important but you can find some of it in your own search. I would not externalise my case because EA job in my example was about security risks for given organisation (in addition to the general risks in the code). That is, only people inside the organisation are supposed to be familiar with internal security policies and can cover this part of the task.

With 'crowdsourcing' of BizEA, the situation is more difficult because Business of the organisation is less formalised than Technology and significant part of Technical Best Practices is replaced by internal culture of business subordination. Before going with 'crowdsourcing' for Business, I would like to have concrete Business Architecture in place, not only a role of BizArchitect.

Due to the same internal culture of business subordination, even relatively simple business architectural construct can appear as personal managerial decisions. That is, a change to them or a challenge of them easily becomes a personal matter. I would go with 'crowdsourcing' example when the authority of Business Architecture prevails managerial authority of individual BU and LOB managers in the organisation.

Posted 9 months ago |



Carval Swaby (you)

Strategy, Enterprise Architecture, BPM Consultant

[See all Carval's activity »](#)

@Michael:

This might veer us a bit from the crowdsourcing topic, but I'm curious on weighing in on what you are articulating.

If I'm reading you correctly, your formula for EA is "EA = Biz EA + IT EA", wherein the Biz EA will be an overarching unit within the enterprise, sufficiently empowered to steer all business/managerial decisions. This will definitely be a major sell, given traditional or defacto business practices and deep rooted cultural norms in most enterprises today. It would certainly be a radical shift for both EA and the business strategy and/or operational functions as we commonly know them.

This is a major feat, Michael... but again, we are here to solve problems and improve situations. By the way, as this being prototyped anywhere? Are there any metrics on its success, if any?

Side Note: My biased perspective on EA has always being...

EA = Biz EA + Info EA + IT EA + possibly other EAs based on organizational norms and Biz strategy.

However, regarding the empowerment aspect of the Biz EA, I tend to leave that to the executive- or C-level folks since their main job function is to set and ensure that the vision and mission of the enterprise are being fulfilled. Obviously EA must and should have a seat at this level, which could be directly (very seldom) or via some CxO resource.

Posted 9 months ago |



Michael Poulin

Head of Business and Technology Architecture at BuTechCon Ltd.

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Well, the formula I referred was taken from TOGAF and InfoEA was part of IT EA. I think, that InfoEA should be a part of Biz EA with implementation in IT EA.

InfoEA, to my understanding, is about business meta-data model (not about values but about interpretation of these values). The same data may be interpreted differently depending on the business context. I am in favor of semantic data mappings between business contexts while the values must come from the shared Master data collection.

As of Business Architecture prototype, it does not exist yet but I know about very well performing element of it working in former No.1 American investment bank (I may not say its name): it is a cross-divisional and cross-functional business unit and programme. C-level folks direct this unit and use it as an instrument to manage business consistency and integrity across the corporation. One of the major differences between this unit and other BU/LOBs is in that cross-functional business unit has the authority equal-to-higher than management of the BU/LOBs. No one business project sees the life without approval of this unit (it is not a Board of Directors that meets occasionally, it is a team of people working full-time, daily)

Yes, it is still not a business architecture but a very big step toward it.

Posted 9 months ago |

**Frederick Lange**

Data Architecture Consultant
 See all Frederick's activity »
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Michael,

A "concrete Business Architecture"? You've got to be kidding!

BA or any other A must be viewed as organic. Architects can propose an architecture. But until it is substantiated by project experience, crowdsourcing, or whatever, it is nothing more than a proposal. And even then, its gonna change.

Posted 9 months ago |

**Michael Poulin**

Head of Business and
 Technology Architecture at
 BuTechCon Ltd.
 See all Michael's activity »
 Follow Michael

Nice catch, Frederick! 'Concrete' means not only 'firm' but 'real', 'specific' and 'particular'. This is what I meant.

Also, I resist taking 'organic' as an equivalent to 'amorphic'. So, when architecture is going to change, it has to move from concrete state A to concrete state B, and not to 'b', or 'beta', or something fuzzy.

Posted 9 months ago |

**Carval Swaby** YOU

Strategy, Enterprise
 Architecture, BPM Consultant
 See all Carval's activity »

@All:

Was out for a few days... but wanted to thank all contributors to this discussion thread. I hope the topic was thought provoking and enlightening to most, particularly to those who were not familiar with the term crowdsourcing.

Just wanted to add that crowdsourcing in general is been leveraged in several business contexts, and has proven to be a cost-effective way of getting difficult or mundane work tasks done quickly and cost-effectively by utilizing an open community forum (whether internally or externally). Check out Amazon's Mechanical Turk (<https://www.mturk.com>) and some Youtube videos (http://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=crowdsourcing&search_type=&aq=f) for some of what's happening on the crowdsourcing front.

In closing, it's obvious that crowdsourcing in the context EA development and/or management work will be a hard sell, especially if it involves publicly broadcasting EA work tasks outside the corporate walls. Citing Michael Poulin's scenario posted earlier, there just might be some EA work tasks that lend themselves to crowdsourcing, at least doing it internally!

Regards

Posted 9 months ago |

**Gregg Haugland**

IT Executive, Enterprise
 Architect, Technology
 Business Incubation and
 Writer/Novelist
 See all Gregg's activity »
 Follow Gregg

@ all - as usual, responses to this post got off topic, which was good in this case.

@ Carval - I agree that your 4 external points are valid (with a couple of dozen others), not to mention the real internal problems that exist in a business environment. What I don't understand is the question. Make EA simpler? Are you asking for shortcuts to make the job easier? Part of the dynamics and position responsibilities of an EA's job is to understand, digest and extrapolate to changing environments and conditions. Otherwise, just write a framework and take a few months off.

I wonder how a patient would feel if he knew his surgeon was posting on a LI group and asked, "anyone know any way to make a liver transplant simpler? Maybe we could get a crowd together."

Posted 8 months ago |

**Michael Poulin**

Head of Business and
 Technology Architecture at
 BuTechCon Ltd.
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Splendid, Gregg!

I did see a cardiologist that looked into the encyclopedia for almost every case and even in the surgery room...

We have talked about this point already - crowdsourcing is applicable to only very specific ER tasks. It is exactly the same situation as with Web 2.0 - it is good for social networks but BAD for finance, healthcare, etc. where the Business is responsible for exact instructions and requires exact following these exact instructions.

Posted 8 months ago |



Carval Swaby (YOU)
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@Gregg:

I'm not necessarily advocating shortcuts, though that would help, but more so capitalizing on available mechanisms or channels -- emerging or otherwise -- that could contribute towards making the overall job of developing or managing the EA a bit easier for the enterprise architect. My original premise has been that EA work is complex and can be difficult to manage given the many factors at play. So ways need to be found to help simplify all this. Obviously there are pros and cons here but it definitely worth discussing.

I'm also beyond rehashing structural aspects of the EA discipline -- i.e. the WHAT and WHO -- but more into the actionable aspects of EA -- i.e. the HOW. That said, Crowdsourcing has been tossed in here to see if it has any merit in reducing cost or improving delivery and quality of certain EA-related "work task deliverables". As Michael has pointed out, we have somewhat beaten this one to death but might have settled on a few things as outlined.

I just wanted to add that Crowdsourcing -- like other business practices, techniques, methods, etc. -- has its applicability, but must first and foremost be assessed for "goodness of fit" for a particular business circumstance. Again, crowdsourcing IMO is about YOU DECIDING what aspect(s) of your WORK TASKS -- such as certain tasks/activities in executing your EA framework -- you might want to get done by resources within a community forum. Resources could be inside or outside the enterprise, and may just be better skilled or equipped to get the task done. The bonus here being that you could get back multiple completed results for the one task, not just one, and you choose from among them -- possibly paying some reward for the chosen one (or two, or three, ...).

On that note, I wouldn't dream of crowdsourcing the full task of a liver transplant procedure... just far too many risks involve and therefore not a good fit for the situation!

Posted 8 months ago |

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