Avoid the 13 Worst EA Practices and Navigate to EA Success

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Despite best efforts, many EA programs fall from "best practices" to "worst practices." EA practitioners must be constantly vigilant and navigate away from 13 worst practices that could sink EA efforts. Here, we identify the 13 worst EA practices and what can be done to avoid them.

Key Findings

■ Without "linkage" to business strategy and to targeted business outcomes — which inform enterprise architecture (EA) efforts and provide guidance — it is very difficult for EA practitioners to make business and IT recommendations that they can act and deliver on.

■ Organizations are not "doing" enterprise architecture if they are only doing IT or technology-only architecture in isolation. Focusing on IT or technology-only architecture is not the same as EA.

■ A current-state first architecture focuses attention on today’s pain points and problems, leading to a tactical strategy of fixes or more of the same.

■ When governance and assurance become excessive, bureaucratic and time-consuming and add no value, business and IT teams do their best to avoid or ignore EA.

Recommendations

■ Proactively work with business and IT leaders in an innovative, collaborative and consultative manner to drive the organization’s business as well as digital business strategies and to ensure a balance between innovation and running and growing the business.

■ Start or refocus EA efforts by defining a business outcome statement, and use it to inform, guide and drive business, technology, information and solution decisions.

■ Understand and document the current-state architecture driven by the future-state vision — not the other way around.

■ Focus on defining just enough governance and standards to help guide the organization toward a business-outcome-driven future-state vision, rather than putting the business at risk by over-
focusing and overwhelming users with too much governance and too many standards that often get ignored.

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Introduction

Just as there are best practices to follow, there are “worst practices” to avoid. Over the last five years of helping organizations build their EA practices, we’ve observed 13 worst practices that enterprise architects often fall into. Any one of these worst practices could sink an EA program.

To help EA practitioners navigate safely around them, we detail each worst practice and provide guidance on how to circumvent and remediate them. We provide tips for traps particularly important to EA leaders who are starting, restarting or refocusing an EA program. Clients facing issues and challenges supporting their EA efforts should follow the links provided to gain access to more
detailed research, recommendations and best practices. This list of worst practices is by no means exhaustive, and neither is it presented in any order of importance.

Analysis

Today, 70% of organizations are starting or restarting an EA program. This is not because EA is necessarily a "bad thing"; rather, it's because traditional EA is seen not to have business value. Successful EA leaders focus first and foremost on the "why" and "what," before the "how," of "doing" EA. They avoid the pitfalls of a failed EA program by ensuring that EA efforts deliver business outcomes and a continuous value proposition, especially with evolving digital business.

1. No Link to Business Strategy and Targeted Business Outcomes

The most common and probably one of the worst identified practice is when EA practitioners do not spend time creating actionable deliverables that have a direct line-of-sight linkage back to business strategy and targeted business outcomes (see Figure 1).
Figure 1. Business-Outcome-Driven EA

Source: Gartner (February 2016)
Without "linkage" to business strategy and to targeted business outcomes — which inform EA efforts and provide guidance — it is very difficult for EA practitioners to make business and IT recommendations that they can act and deliver on. As a result, many EA practitioners have fallen back to delivering operating and enabling deliverables, rather than focusing first and foremost on creating diagnostic and signature-ready deliverables that management can use to understand opportunities or take action in support of the business’ strategic direction (see "Stage Planning a Business-Outcome-Driven Enterprise Architecture"). Under this scenario, EA practitioners will have an impossible time delivering or demonstrating business value, as well as garnering stakeholder engagement and support.

In a recent survey of EA practitioners, we found "linking EA to business and IT strategy" was their No. 1 issue. In addition, 71% of client inquiries, between 2014 and 2015, specifically focused on business architecture issues (number of respondents equals 585) included business strategy alignment as a central topic.

We find that organizations with successful EA programs use business-outcome-driven EA (see Note 1), based on the development of a business outcome statement (see the Actions section below), as a practical approach to design and deliver signature-ready and actionable recommendations to business and IT leaders. These recommendations enable business and IT leaders to adjust policies and projects to achieve targeted business outcomes based on the business direction and relevant business disruptions. This approach puts business direction (strategy and operations), disruptions (opportunities and risks) and outcomes first in developing signature-ready guidance, empowering chief enterprise architects to: (1) drive enterprise change; (2) deliver high-impact value; and (3) lead the business forward in a competitive environment.

**Actions:**

- Embrace a business-outcome-driven EA approach that is iterative and evolves with your business strategy and delivers measurable outcomes.
- Proactively work with business and IT leaders in an innovative, collaborative, supportive and consulting manner to drive the organization’s digital business strategies and to ensure a balance between innovation and running and growing the business.
- Focus on systems of record, innovation and differentiation.

**For more detailed related research, see:**

- "Stage Planning a Business-Outcome-Driven Enterprise Architecture"
- "Toolkit: Determine Your Business Vision for EA"
- "Business Architecture Is Not Optional for Business-Outcome-Driven EA"
- "Toolkit: Business Outcome Statements Deliver Value to Your Business and Guidance for EA"
- "Deducing Business Strategy Is a Unique Opportunity for EA Practitioners to Both Drive Execution and Gain Credibility"
2. Confusing Technology Architecture With Enterprise Architecture

Most organizations begin their EA efforts by focusing on the technology architecture. Either they do this as a "bottom up" effort in the hope of developing the business architecture later, or they understand EA only in terms of technology. This can be helpful in defining how the technology fits together; unfortunately, without a clear linkage to the business strategy, goals and outcomes, they could very well select, purchase and deploy the wrong technology.

Gartner has always said that EA is about transforming business (today, it includes people, business and things in both the physical and digital worlds); business is about technology, and technology is about business. EA is a discipline that proactively and holistically leads enterprise responses to disruptive forces (see Note 2). It does this by identifying and analyzing the execution of change toward the desired business vision and outcomes.

It is understandable why many organizations are still tempted to start EA by focusing on technology architecture, rather than architecting the enterprise. However, this is a worst practice as these technology-focused efforts will fail to meet the holistic business needs and deliver little business value.

The value of EA is in helping to ensure business and technology investment decisions are made based on sound economic and financial principles that generate monetized business value as ultimately measured by the organization's performance in its financial statements.

Organizations are not "doing" enterprise architecture if they are only doing IT or technology-only architecture in isolation. Focusing on IT or technology-only architecture is not the same as EA. And, although technology architecture efforts are integral to the other viewpoints of EA (business, information and solution architectures), many organizations find it difficult to demonstrate business value and garner long-term business support without a clear line-of-sight linkage, including all four main viewpoints of EA (see Note 2), to targeted business outcomes.

Actions:

- Ensure that EA efforts are focused on targeted business outcomes and on delivering real business value by focusing on all EA efforts within the context of business vision and strategy.
- Start by refocusing EA efforts with a business outcome statement — regardless of the viewpoint of EA — and use the business outcome statement to inform, guide and drive technology, information and/or solution decisions.
- Put all EA efforts within the scope of business outcomes to ensure that the EA is business-focused, not just technology-focused.

For more detailed related research, see:

- "Stage Planning a Business-Outcome-Driven Enterprise Architecture"
3. Focusing on the Current-State Architecture First (or Primarily)

A current-state first architecture focuses attention on today's pain points and problems, leading to a tactical strategy of fixes or more of the same. We recently spoke with a midsize government organization that hired a consultant to "do" its EA, and the output of this work was an 85-page inventory of technologies, applications and their connecting points. Although this gave the organization an understanding of what it had, it provided little business value, because it wasn't linked to any future-state business capabilities and targeted business outcomes.

A worst practice that many EA practitioners fall into is focusing on their current state first by trying to inventory every process, data element, application, service and technology that exists in the organization, and then taking responsibility for maintaining the inventory. This approach will often lead to a never-ending spiral of documenting the current state. Beginning with the future state focuses on the strategy of the organization, the trends and disruptions facing it, and the capabilities needed to support it. This is innovative, future-oriented and visionary — with the future state defined, it is possible to look at the current state and use EA to figure out how to get to the future (by closing the gaps).

Our research finds that the best practice is to focus on understanding your future state first, by leveraging your business outcome statement to guide what you consider in your current state. The clear understanding and articulation of the future state should determine and drive which technologies, applications, solutions, processes and information you will need to tend to first in your current state. Furthermore, most organizations should spend as little time as needed to develop a current state, focusing the majority of their time and effort on creating diagnostic and actionable deliverables (roadmaps, reference models, guiding principles, journey maps and so on) on how to evolve toward a future-state business vision. EA practitioners should focus on doing "just enough" and "just in time" "as is" or current-state architecture.

Action:

- Develop a future-state business vision and context before creating a current-state technology and application inventory.

For more detailed related research, see:

- "The Chief Enterprise Architect's First 100 Days"
- "Magic Quadrant for Enterprise Architecture Consultancies"
- "Market Guide for Business-Outcome-Driven Enterprise Architecture Consulting"
4. Excessive Governance and Overbearing Assurance

Many EA programs struggle to establish an effective governance structure for their organization’s EA initiatives. They often find themselves being ineffective because of insufficient governance or impeding business because of excessive governance. This is also complicated by many EA programs trying to govern everything without considering risk factors. When governance becomes excessive, bureaucratic and time-consuming and adds no value, it’s not surprising that business and IT teams do their best to avoid or ignore EA.

It is critical to note that governance is different from assurance. Governance speaks to the guidance of decision rights and the required processes, policies and procedures for the successful implementation of those decisions in support of the business strategy and direction. Assurance efforts (including the architecture review board) are focused on ensuring that the agreed-on standards and principles created during the architecture creation process are realized and adhered to.

A worst practice is to have little to no governance, which forces an organization to have to define major assurance programs, because people don’t have guidance that helps inform their decisions and actions. Organizations that solely or primarily focus on assurance without defining governance beforehand risk becoming and being perceived as "policing" the rest of the business. This leads to business and IT ignoring and circumventing the best efforts of the EA team. The best practice is for EA to define good business-driven governance, which means there is minimal need for assurance, because people have guidance they can follow.

**Actions:**

- Identify clearly defined business outcomes, and ensure that EA governance is positioned to achieve those outcomes and is not simply adding more controls, assurance and governance.
- Match EA governance decision making and assurance to the organization’s culture, maturity and approach to doing EA.
- Ensure that risk-adjusted value is part of the criteria for designing EA governance. EA governance should be integrated with other processes, such as project portfolio management (PPM), application portfolio management and investment decision making, to maximize business outcomes for the organization.

**For more detailed related research, see:**

- "Gartner Defines 'Governance'"
- "Define EA Governance to Deliver Targeted Business Outcomes"
- "Manage Architectural Debt to Enable Continuous Innovation and Delivery"
5. Creating a Standard for Everything

An obsession with the "right way to do things" can lead EA teams to focus solely, or primarily, on "defining and documenting standards" (such as processes, technologies and services), which links with bureaucratic governance and an excessive focus on assurance.

Business is becoming more active and directly involved in selecting and purchasing IT to drive targeted business outcomes. Traditional technology procurement and purchasing practices are shifting from IT purchasing on behalf of business, to business purchasing IT directly (and often without IT). In 2015, 42% of technology budgets resided outside IT; Gartner believes this will grow to 50% by 2020 (see "Rising to the Challenge of Digital Business: Key Insights From the 2015 Gartner Symposium/ITxpo Keynote").

Most often, EA teams respond to this loss of control by creating standards in an attempt to influence or shape technology decisions. With IT losing immediate and direct control over technology procurement, vendor services and applications, EA practitioners going to the extreme of defining large collections of standards for as many of their technologies and processes as possible is a complete waste of time.

Although reducing total cost of ownership, IT management costs and time through standardization is a laudable goal, without agreement and alignment with business strategy, many organizations have experienced a backlash against standards. The result of too many or a rigid focus on standards is that: (1) users will — on purpose or inadvertently — circumvent or ignore the defined standards; (2) the EA team is saddled with a negative "standards police" reputation; and (3) EA efforts become increasingly viewed as nonstrategic and tactical in nature.

By focusing too much on defining "standards" without a direct line-of-sight linkage to targeted business outcomes, EA leaders have inadvertently introduced even more risk to their efforts and to their business, because IT and business users may ignore the standards that are really important to unlocking future-state business capabilities and business efforts.

**Actions:**

- Focus on defining just enough standards to help guide the organization toward a business-outcome-driven future-state vision, rather than putting business at risk by over focusing and overwhelming their users with too many standards that get ignored.
- Step back and determine what exact and specific set of standards is really needed to support business in the digital era, where the focus is shifting from "inside-out," "outside-in" to "outside-out" architecture.

**For more detailed related research, see:**

- "Future of EA 2025: Evolving From Enterprise to Ecosystem"
- "Architect Your Business to Sense, Respond and Create Business Moments"
6. Engrossed in the Art and Language of EA Rather Than Business Outcomes

A very common worst practice of "traditional EA" is that EA practitioners become overly engrossed with practicing the "art and/or academic theories of EA." When EA practitioners become fixated with trying to lead, educate, facilitate and create EA deliverables (artifacts), they most often forget the value proposition or business value of their efforts. To demonstrate business value to the organization, EA efforts must be targeted, pragmatic and "right sized" in approach (for example, iterative, defined scoped, usable and available) and continually integrated with business outcomes, with the sole purpose of creating enterprise value.

This may mean that an EA team will execute on EA processes and practices (that is, creating, operating or enabling deliverables — the "how" of EA), rather than creating diagnostic and signature-ready deliverables (the "why" and "what" of EA), without using EA leaders to communicate with business and IT leaders.

The goal is to focus on supporting and enabling business and IT leaders to make strategic investment decisions. This means EA practitioners need to collaborate and communicate with business and IT leaders using terms (nomenclature) that are understood and meaningful to them. We find that approximately 20% of organizations promote their efforts using a term other than EA. Because of past negative perceptions of EA, the need now, more than ever, is to communicate to business effectively and in terms they understand.

Actions:

- Avoid getting hung up on EA terms for the sake of "practicing EA." Develop business knowledge and focus on speaking the language of business.
- Ensure that the EA communication plan includes presentations and collateral (such as business context, future state, business capability models and roadmaps) that continually reaffirm targeted business-outcomes.

For more detailed related research, see:

- "Use Five Best Practices to Increase EA Stakeholder Engagement and Support"
- "Developing and Using Stakeholder Analysis to Build Support for EA"
- "EA Communications: New Strategies for Building Business Partnerships and Influence"
- "EA Communications: Transforming Enterprise Architecture Into a Meaningful, Human-Centered Experience"
- "Toolkit: Use an EA Charter to Give Stakeholders Clarity on EA's Purpose and Scope"
- "Toolkit: How to Develop a 'Business Strategy on a Page'"
7. Strict Adherence to EA Frameworks and Industry Reference Models

Every organization is unique, and the EA team must create an EA framework to suit its particular business needs by blending key elements of industry standard frameworks and reference models. Rather than doing that, a worst practice is to simply and blindly adopt an industry or common EA framework (such as The Open Group Architecture Framework, the Department of Defense Architecture Framework, the Zachman Framework and so on).

We also hear from clients who use industry reference models (such as the Banking Industry Architecture Network [BIAN], Association for Cooperative Operations Research and Development [ACORD] and American Productivity and Quality Center [APQC]) to model the future state and to speed time to value. Frequently, these clients do this without customizing the industry reference models to ensure competitive business advantage.

It is a bad use of time and resources for an EA team to create EA artifacts, principles and standards without taking the time to determine what is needed by the business within their own organization, what drives their EA efforts, and how an EA process should develop, given their culture. An overly dogmatic adherence to any EA framework and industry reference model generally results in the production of EA output documents that are of limited business value. EA frameworks and industry reference models are only as good as how well they support an organization's business, cultural and vision needs.

A best practice is to use an EA framework and industry reference model to help guide organizational efforts. Neither should be used to dictate or drive the entire EA process. It is Gartner’s position that it is best to focus on the starting point of business-outcome-driven EA — understanding business strategy and direction — before adopting EA frameworks, standards and industry reference models, and customizing them to sustain competitive advantage. In other words, the "why" and "what" (goals and targeted outcomes) of EA must supersede the "how" (EA frameworks and industry reference models).

**Actions:**

- Customize and "right size" EA frameworks and industry reference models to the organization’s needs. Remember, EA frameworks and industry reference models are generic. Not all components are necessary to do business-outcome-driven EA.
- Prioritize the most important business outcomes, and customize the framework to match delivery ("just enough" and "just in time") against business needs.
- Consider blending EA frameworks (creating a custom-made framework) by picking the processes, practices and artifacts that are the most relevant for business needs. Augment EA frameworks with organizational ideas and industry best practices.
Use EA frameworks and reference models as guides. They should augment and support your organization’s business, people, culture, processes and technology needs.

For more detailed related research, see:

- "Taming Your EA Framework With Business Outcomes"
- "Enterprise Architecture Process and Framework; CIO Desk Reference Chapter 9, Updated Q4 2011"
- "Gartner’s 2011 Global Enterprise Architecture Survey: EA Frameworks Are Still Homemade and Hybrid"
- "Hype Cycle for Enterprise Architecture, 2015"
- "Magic Quadrant for Enterprise Architecture Consultancies"
- "Magic Quadrant for Enterprise Architecture Tools"

8. Adopting an "Ivory Tower" Approach to EA

Business-outcome-driven EA is a highly collaborative endeavor involving individuals and teams from across the organization. Creating models is only a small part of EA’s value — the bigger portion comes from involving and engaging people in EA so it is valuable to them and the outcomes they are driving. EA teams often find it easier to create models, and lots of them, rather than getting involved in the more challenging part of putting them into practice. This worst practice often proves fatal with CIOs, who cite this as the reason they got rid of their EA program (which was not deemed to have any business value).

This can happen if the EA program falls into the worst practice of becoming too focused on technical and "as is" architecture, rigidly adopting EA frameworks and industry reference models, and handing down standards, principles and guidelines to the business and the IT organization, as if they are tomes to be followed to the letter of the law. It can also happen if EA practitioners focus too much on assurance and compliance and not enough on governance and targeted business outcomes and business value. If the EA effort is seen as a roadblock and impediment, or as the policing agency, then it is likely to be ignored and circumvented by end users. This is a very risky position for any organization because, more than ever, business and IT users can easily acquire, access and use technology services and applications without or with little IT involvement.

Focus your EA efforts on delivering business outcomes and working with the variety of stakeholders involved in those efforts. Create a culture of coaching and mentoring in the EA team. Many EA teams find it helpful to map out the execution process — how their organization moves from strategy and goals, as well as the individual initiatives and projects that define them. What are the steps along the way, who is involved, what are they doing, and how can EA support them? This ensures the EA practice is delivering what is needed, and that the EA team is focused on supporting and helping the right stakeholders at the right time.
Actions:

- Remember that EA is a team sport that requires EA practitioners to work across business and IT to facilitate and enable decision making.
- Collaborate with business and IT leaders to achieve consensus on making the right business and technology decisions for the organization. Continuously find new ways to work with business and IT leaders.
- Acquire new soft skills for collaborative purposes, leveraging new approaches to value creation (such as "economic architecture") (see Note 3), and focusing and employing new modeling techniques.

For more detailed related research, see:

- "Vanguard and Foundational Enterprise Architects Must Collaborate on a Bimodal Technology Architecture"
- "Best Practices for Delivering Targeted and High-Impact Roadmaps"
- "Classify Roadmap Styles to Guide Roadmap Development"
- "Create Enterprise Roadmaps to Communicate and Execute Strategy Effectively"
- "Five Best Practices for Building EA Roadmaps That Enable Outcomes"
- "Business Outcomes Are the Milestones on an Application Strategy Roadmap"
- "Use Five Best Practices to Increase EA Stakeholder Engagement and Support"
- "EA Practitioners Must Focus on Outcome-Oriented Deliverables"

9. Lack of Continuous Communication and Feedback

A worst practice is for EA practitioners not to create a proactive communication plan and a continuous feedback loop with business and IT leaders. Without this, they are putting their jobs at risk. In fact, in a recent survey of EA practitioners, we find that 23% of respondents have no engagement with their business counterparts because: (1) they focus EA only on technology decisions; or (2) business sees EA effort as relevant to IT only.

EA practitioners need to ensure that the outputs of EA are available and usable by both business and IT leaders, and they need to proactively develop communication channels to encourage participation and feedback. Furthermore, the only way to build bridges to business leaders is to keep reaching out with deliverables that they find valuable.

Feedback mechanisms and channels include collaborative teams of business and IT people. In addition, a best practice is to take the simple step of checking that the EA information that is made available can be easily understood and applied, and that it meets stakeholder needs. If the project management office and project teams, for example, can't find or understand what EA is asking
them to do, how can they put it into practice? Organizations risk wasting their efforts because of lack of support and/or adoption if they do not engage diverse people from across the enterprise to collaborate, provide input, review and advise. They also risk creating EA that has little link to business needs and targeted outcomes, and they risk a backlash from users who resent not having provided input.

**Actions:**

- Do not leave communication as an afterthought. The value of EA is in how it is used proactively by business and IT to transform business toward a desired future state.
- Ensure artifacts are known, available, understood and linked to targeted business outcomes. This creates business value and impact.
- Develop feedback communication channels, such as teams of business and IT people, collaborative tools, and corporate social networks.

**For more detailed related research, see:**

- "Effective Communications: How to Develop a Communications Plan"
- "Toolkit: Enterprise Architecture Communication Planning Workshop"
- "Use Five Best Practices to Increase EA Stakeholder Engagement and Support"
- "Best Practices: Communicating the Value of Enterprise Architecture"
- "Effective Communications: How to Develop a Communications Plan"
- "Effective Communications: Lead Through Storytelling"

10. ** Restricting the EA Team to IT Resources Only**

Often, EA is initiated by an IT leader in many organizations, because they are faced with a plethora of systems, applications, networks, services and information that they need to reconcile, manage and integrate across business. As a result, many organizations still pursue hiring enterprise architects with deep technical skills in one or more areas. These are often people who may feel strongly about specific approaches, technologies or processes. In addition, they may or may not have strong collaboration, communication or facilitation skills (soft skills).

A worst practice is for an enterprise architect to view EA as an independent discipline (confusing technology architecture with enterprise architecture), rather than an interdependent discipline where diverse parties are critical to achieving targeted business outcomes. To ensure that EA is focused on business and IT, chief enterprise architects should leverage skills from diverse business functions and stakeholders, as either a virtual or an organizational team. Architecture teams may include or may seek input from people with deep knowledge and experience with specific technologies. However, EA teams must also include versatilists with deep and broad business, people, organizational and process expertise.
**Actions:**

- Do not staff your EA team solely with technologists. Supporting EA is not just about IT; it is about enabling business (people, business and things) to transform toward a desired future state.
- Develop EA teams based on a diversity of knowledge, experience and perspectives (business, process, people, information and technology).
- Look to extend existing EA capabilities with vanguard enterprise architects who think, behave and act in an innovative consulting manner to drive their organization’s digital business strategies and to ensure a balance between innovation and running and growing the business.

**For more detailed related research, see:**

- "Vanguard Enterprise Architects Will Lead Bimodal Mode 2 Innovations"
- "Vanguard and Foundational Enterprise Architects Must Collaborate on a Bimodal Technology Architecture"
- "Define EA Team Roles and Competencies to Maximize the Team’s Effectiveness"
- "Use Mentoring and Coaching to Create a High-Performance EA Team"
- "Make Enterprise Architect a Career, Not Just a Job Title"
- "Define EA Team Roles and Competencies to Maximize the Team’s Effectiveness"
- "Sustaining the EA Discipline — Best Practices in Recruiting and Hiring for the EA Team"
- "Chief Enterprise Architects Must Proactively Manage Their Next Career Move"
- "EA Best Practices for Small EA Teams to Promote Wider Participation"
- "Toolkit: Develop Your EA Career Potential"

**11. Lack of Key Performance Metrics**

Leading EA programs measure EA performance in terms of how well the EA program helped deliver targeted business outcomes. However, a big challenge for many EA programs and EA practitioners is demonstrating the business value of EA. Today, less than 44% of EA practitioners have any defined metrics (see “EA Business Value Metrics You Must Have Today”).

The ability of the EA program to demonstrate and deliver business value is directly linked to the EA program’s ability to measure the outcome of its efforts (that is, the actual value and perceived value of enterprise stakeholders). EA practitioners must develop metrics that are linked to the leading and lagging performance indicators of the business, not the activities of EA per se (such as tracking the number of artifacts created).
To understanding how well the EA program is performing, conduct a maturity assessment (see "ITScore for Enterprise Architecture"). Take business surveys so that EA team members understand whether they are executing correctly. Ensure business leadership understands how the EA program is helping facilitate business with achieving future-state business capabilities, which, in turn, drive targeted business outcomes. Know how the EA program is impacting the organization’s bottom line (such as revenue, cash flow and operating effectiveness).

EA practitioners and organizational stakeholders must agree what business outcomes the EA program will be supporting (what will be the focus of EA efforts?). They should use semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders (asking what worked, what didn’t work and what improvements can be made) and create scorecards. Lastly, EA programs must embody continuous improvement. Each year, review the EA practice, and tailor, adjust and refine it — don’t expect the EA program to remain static; it will change as the organization evolves.

**Actions:**

- Focus business value metrics on EA's short-term impact on the ability to run the business and EA’s long-term effect on the ability to grow and transform the business.
- Develop metrics that reflect business strategy and direction, resonate with executive management, and, show a line of sight between the efforts of EA targeted business outcomes (metrics).
- Work with other strategic planning efforts (including performance management and other key stakeholders) to determine, and approve, key business value metrics.

**For more detailed related research, see:**

- "EA Business Value Metrics You Must Have Today"
- "Digital Business Success Will Be Driven by Economic Architecture"
- "Make Economic Architecture Practical for All Levels of Enterprise Architecture Maturity"
- "Leading Indicators Are a Critical Tool for Digital Business"
- "Using Risk-Adjusted Value Management to Close the Strategy Gap and Gain Competitive Advantage"
- "Executive Summary: The Gartner Business Risk Model"
- "Toolkit: The Gartner Business Risk Model"
- "Toolkit: Presentation on Developing High-Impact EA Performance Metrics"
- "Toolkit: EA Metrics Drive Business Value Key Initiative"
12. Purchasing an EA Tool Before Understanding the Use Cases and Critical Capabilities Required by the Organization

In an effort to rapidly stand up or jump-start an EA program, a common worst practice is for clients to acquire an EA tool at the outset (this is often done in conjunction with adopting an EA framework and doing "as is" architecture). EA practitioners, first and foremost, must understand their organization’s business direction and strategy.

EA tools can provide tremendous business value by enabling decision support and analysis for organizational stakeholders wanting to make business and IT investment decisions. However, EA tools are merely a means to an end (remember, "a fool with a tool is still a fool"). EA tools themselves do not solve users' needs, nor do they deliver business outcomes. Like any other tool, EA tools must have a value proposition.

EA practitioners must understand the importance of developing an organizational value proposition that goes beyond the reactionary needs of their foundational IT-focused program. In fact, focusing on implementing a tool can be a huge distraction for EA leaders just starting out, because it takes them away from the important work of understanding their business strategy, business models and goals; determining what problem they are trying to solve; defining the appropriate processes and governance; and building relationships across the business and IT.

Actions:

- Consider the acquisition of an EA tool once you’ve got your business-outcome-driven EA program efforts started (diagnostic and signature-ready deliverables, charter and scope, organization, basic governance and metrics, and so on).

- Understand and articulate the compelling business problems, opportunities and outcomes that an EA tool will help solve both today and tomorrow, and make sure you develop organizational use cases with consensus that link functional requirements and critical EA tool capabilities to targeted business outcomes.

For more detailed related research, see:

- "Critical Factors for Developing a Winning Value Proposition to Acquire an EA Tool: What You Don't Know Will Hurt You"

- "Selecting EA Tools: Use Cases Are Not Optional"

- "Magic Quadrant for Enterprise Architecture Tools"

- "Critical Capabilities for Enterprise Architecture Tools"

- "Understand the Core Capabilities of an Enterprise Architecture Tool"
13. "We're Done"

A worst practice is for EA practitioners to propagate (and organizations to view) EA as a "project," with a finite "start" and "end" date. Additionally, an associated worst practice is for organizations to view EA as a "thing" one delivers and then is done with; "an architecture." This mindset can result in several challenges:

- An "enterprise architecture" is created and then put on a shelf, quickly becoming obsolete.
- Resources are reallocated at a specific date, so EA efforts deliver limited impact and value.
- Management expectations are out of sync, so EA efforts are disbanded.

Although a specific iteration of EA that is focused on a specific scope may be pursued as a project, EA overall is an ongoing, continuous and iterative effort, especially since targeted business outcomes will change at an even a faster pace during the evolving digital revolution.

**Actions:**

- Create a value proposition for the EA program from the outset — regardless of whether you are starting, restarting or refocusing an EA program.
- Perpetually propagate the value proposition across the organization. Work with business and IT leaders and users to help them understand that EA is an ongoing effort, such as strategic planning, budgeting, operations management and PPM.
- Ensure that expectations are clearly set (what the EA program will do and what the EA will not do and, as well as what it will be measured against), that EA teams are defined, and that resources are correctly allocated to short- and long-term EA efforts.

**For more detailed related research, see:**

- "Vanguard Enterprise Architects Will Lead Bimodal Mode 2 Innovations"
- "Vanguard and Foundational Enterprise Architects Must Collaborate on a Bimodal Technology Architecture"
- "Measure the Value of the IT Organization From Your Stakeholder’s Perspective"
- "An Enterprise Architecture Charter Is a Basic Requirement for All EA Maturity Levels"
- "Toolkit: Develop Your EA Career Potential"

**Gartner Recommended Reading**

_Some documents may not be available as part of your current Gartner subscription._

"Hype Cycle for Enterprise Architecture, 2015"
Evidence

1 Gartner conducted a survey in November 2015 of potential client and nonclient attendees from North America and Europe at Gartner's 2016 enterprise architecture summit in Washington, D.C. and London, England (the number of respondents equaled 1,239). The question asked was: "What are the most important topics related to enterprise architecture that you are interested in learning about or getting advice on?"

2 Gartner conducted a survey in November 2015 of potential client and nonclient attendees from North America and Europe at Gartner's 2016 enterprise architecture summit in Washington, D.C. and London, England (the number of respondents equaled 1,239). The question asked was: "How would you describe the level of engagement your organization’s business leaders have with EA?"

Note 1 Definition of "Business-Outcome-Driven EA"

Business-outcome-driven EA is a practical approach designed to deliver signature-ready and actionable recommendations to business and IT leaders. These recommendations enable business and IT leaders to adjust policies and projects to achieve target business outcomes based on the business direction and relevant business disruptions (see "Stage Planning a Business-Outcome-Driven Enterprise Architecture").

This approach puts business direction (strategy and operations), disruptions (opportunities and risks) and outcomes first in developing signature-ready guidance, empowering chief enterprise architects to:

- Drive enterprise change
- Deliver high-impact value
- Lead the business forward in a competitive environment
Note 2 Definition of "Enterprise Architecture"

EA is a discipline that proactively and holistically leads enterprise responses to disruptive forces. It does this by identifying and analyzing the execution of change toward the desired business vision and outcomes. Mainstream viewpoints of EA include:

- Business architecture, which guides people, process and organizational change
- Information architecture, which focuses on the consistent sharing of information across the enterprise
- Solution architecture, which develops a direction for managing the portfolio of to-be solutions
- Technical architecture, which focuses on evolving the technical infrastructure

Note 3 Definition of "Economic Architecture"

Economic architecture is a discipline for driving an enterprise’s business model through financial metrics and key performance indicators. It is a critical tool to plan, track and manage future-state value creation mechanisms.

For more detailed related research, see:

- "Digital Business Success Will Be Driven by Economic Architecture"
- "Make Economic Architecture Practical for All Levels of Enterprise Architecture Maturity"
- "Leading Indicators Are a Critical Tool for Digital Business"