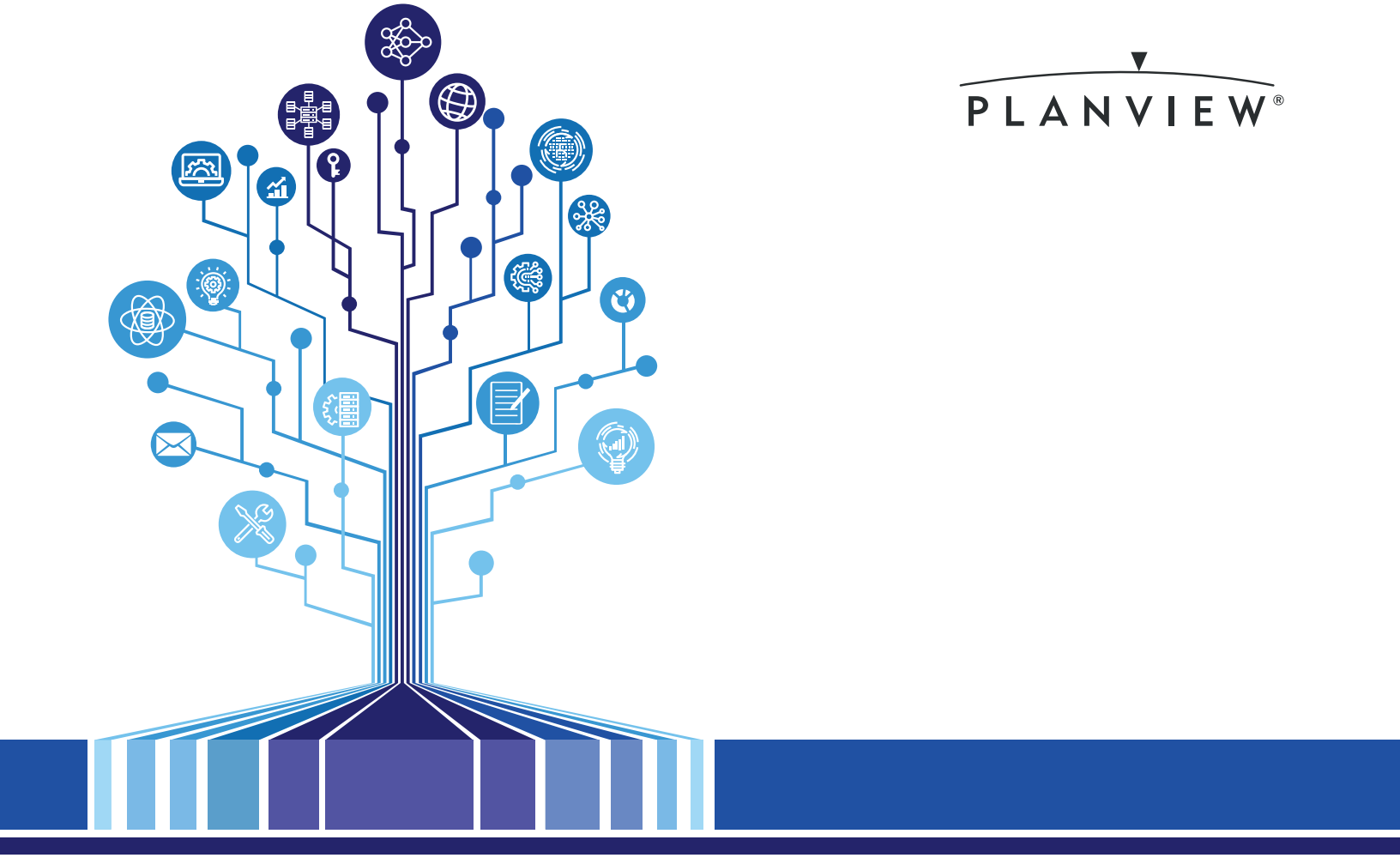


PLANVIEW®

Whitepaper

An Enterprise Architecture Communication Framework

Three Ways to Have Business Conversations About Technology

Never has the knowledge and experience of enterprise architects been more relevant and needed than today. Every industry is going through digital transformation, and the pace of innovation in new technology has never been quicker. This is an opportunity for enterprise architects to shine, yet many are finding it difficult to get noticed. They are often known only as the "smart guys in the corner." If enterprise architects do not show the value they can bring to the business, the opportunity to advance strategy and become a vital member of the transformation leadership team will be lost.

Are the Frameworks You are Using Enough?

So, how can you help the business advance strategy and achieve its objectives? What roles do enterprise architecture frameworks and modeling methodologies have in this process? Do frameworks such as TOGAF, FEAF, or Zachman help your business leaders understand the strategic value of enterprise architecture? Can UML or Archimate get you a seat at the strategy planning table? Are they designed to answer such questions?

To help you answer these questions, this paper examines the following topics:

- The current business landscape and the associated opportunities for enterprise architects
- The challenges enterprise architects face with current frameworks and methodologies
- A simple three-part "framework" that can help enterprise architects be the drivers of transformation within their organizations

Not Seeing the Forest for the Trees

In today's digital business environment, technology is increasingly complex and rapidly changing. Companies are exploring how to incorporate technology into everything they do, from R&D to sales to customer service. They are moving quickly to innovate the customer experience and get products and services to market faster.

Most organizations already have an overwhelming amount of interconnected applications and technology. As a result, they are struggling to respond to changes in the market and adapt to customer demands. To transform their businesses, they need a way to manage this complexity and mitigate risks.

This is where you as an enterprise architect can shine. As you know, enterprise architecture is one of the few groups in most companies that understand the technology landscape and how those systems support the business. Enterprise architects have long managed information about complex technology environments, mapped out current and future states of technology, and acted as trusted advisors to the IT department. However, they are often overlooked by other parts of the organization, especially those closer to the customer such as product development and marketing.[1]

Business leaders are starting to recognize the importance of purposefully planning and leveraging the use of technology to achieve business objectives. Faced with the pressures of digital transformation, they are realizing how critical it is to streamline their technology portfolios, think beyond projects to business outcomes, and focus on the strategic capabilities needed to achieve their objectives – what you would simply call "doing enterprise architecture."

These business leaders are asking questions such as:

- What products and services are we delivering to our customers?
- How do our projects fit into the bigger ecosystem?
- What outcomes – such as technology, applications, products, and services – do we need to achieve our strategic objectives?
- What are our core competencies as an organization?
- What capabilities do we need to add to fulfill our strategic goals?

Enterprise architects are uniquely positioned to answer these questions, but too often no one is asking for their expertise. Enterprise architecture modeling tools do not provide the information in the context business leaders need to make informed decisions. As a result, enterprise architects find it difficult to engage with business leaders and advise them on strategic direction. The pace of technology innovation makes the problem worse: The more application, technology, and service portfolios balloon, the more time enterprise architects spend bogged down in modeling and visualizations that don't communicate value.

The question then is how can you break free and be ***recognized*** as the valuable resources you are? Business leaders are expecting their enterprise architecture teams to help them navigate through uncertainty and change. The bottom line: You can't do this without making a meaningful, ***business-oriented*** connection with business leaders.

Architecture Frameworks: Down in the Weeds

You have a plethora of frameworks and methodologies to choose from: TOGAF, DODAF, MEAF, Zachman, and others. But these were not designed as strategy communication tools between the business and technology, and above all they are not designed for business conversations. These frameworks are formal, detailed, and methodical systems for documenting current and future technology systems. With the speed of business today and technology embedded in everything businesses do, the task of modeling every aspect of every business change cannot scale.

Here are some of the problems with these types of frameworks:

Frameworks: Topography Without Business Context

Built by architects for architects, enterprise architecture frameworks are complicated. A substantial investment in training and certification is usually required. Coming straight out of framework certification training, a common result is that practitioners focus more on adhering to the framework's rules rather than adding business value. Sometimes the end game is lost. The endeavor becomes mapping for mapping's sake, with no context and connection to business strategy. With no ability to bridge to the business, enterprise architects cannot help their leaders make the right business decisions.

Modeling Language and Visualizations: The Business Gets Lost in the Forest

Common frameworks and methodologies often use jargon-heavy language. They also focus on creating visual models using specific notation elements or layouts with one view or a single, complex way of explaining current state. Standards like BPMN for modeling business processes or the more general-purpose UML define a strict set of visual notation elements and rules. A detailed visual showing how all parts of a system are inter-connected does not provide business context.

These modeling tools are detailed and designed for consumption by specific, technical architecture roles. Will business executives look at or understand them? Further, as technology and application portfolios grow, the task of documenting and modeling everything visually becomes an onerous, time-consuming process.

Difficult to Scale and Deliver on Strategy: Growth and Adaptability Is Slow or Stunted

The breadth and complexity of modern companies mean enterprise architects cannot model everything. If the outputs from enterprise architects don't help business leaders make better business decisions, then what's left? While the visual depiction may highlight some scary-looking problems, enterprise architects are still left struggling to verbally articulate what the problems mean for the business and how their proposal will deliver on strategy.

If you want to have meaningful, strategic decision conversations with business partners, you must be able to have business conversations about technology, not technology conversations about business.

A Communication Framework

To be a part of the team that drives transformational and innovation strategies, you need a lightweight, high-level framework that focuses primarily on communication, not modeling. The goal is to proactively help execute strategy. You do this by helping leaders make better, smarter decisions about technology. This framework does not replace formal enterprise architecture frameworks, it augments them.

This communication framework is a simple set of three key themes that you should include during your interactions and correspondence with business stakeholders:

1. **Confirm Ability to Deliver:** Share how the application and technology portfolio is optimized for change, and that the IT organization can deliver the business capabilities, at acceptable costs and risk levels, required to support business objectives.
2. **Provide Business Context:** Connect company strategy, how the business operates, and how applications, technology, and information need to come together to realize strategy.
3. **Make Recommendations:** Provide optimized, ready-for-execution projects and initiatives that address current business needs and deliver on corporate strategy.

Confirm Ability to Deliver

If business leaders cannot see that their own technology portfolio is cost-effective, optimized for change, and under control, they will turn outside the organization for future solutions. You are well positioned to drive these optimizations within IT and to report on the successful results. Examples that you should routinely communicate are:

- The identification and elimination of cost from duplicate applications and technology
- The reduction of complexity and the number of interdependencies within the portfolio
- The application of optimal use of technology from one business unit to other, less efficient business units
- The reduction of the number of different kinds of technology deployed in the environment

Provide Business Context

Enterprise architects have always used visualizations and models to communicate amongst themselves, so traditional enterprise architecture views focus on technology first. When technically oriented enterprise architects provide business-oriented views, these tend to focus on cost and risk. Obviously, cost and risk are still important, but digital transformation primarily depends on delivering new business capabilities.

To make this shift requires framing common IT situations into a "what's in it for our business" point of view. To illustrate the difference, see the table below, which gives examples of both strategic and tactical issues and opportunities that occur from common enterprise architecture situations.

Situation	Tactical Thinking	Transformational Thinking
Business units A & B both running their own instance of the same CRM application, desire to consolidate	Cost of supporting two instances can be reduced by consolidation	Business unit A handles more calls per CRM rep because of the way they have configured their instance, adopting across all business units improves customer satisfaction
Existing CRM application has a voice response and mobile capability that is not being used	We are paying for un-used technical capabilities	Using this capability supports our omni-channel strategy resulting in improved customer satisfaction scores
Databases approaching vendor end of support need upgrading	Increased support cost; Increased security risk because database is at end of life	Higher potential of business disruption and reduced availability of services to our customers

Table 1. Issues and Opportunities Arising from Typical Enterprise Architecture Situations

Make Recommendations

If you can express the ability to deliver optimized technology portfolios and provide business context, you will be in an excellent position to lead digital transformation initiatives by presenting well-documented, ready-to-execute project proposals and options to decision makers. Such proposals will be tied to key objectives and strategy from their initiation and will have more accurate scoping and impact analysis. These enterprise architect driven projects are a form of "preferred demand" that have lower implementation risk and quicker time to value.

Establishing Your Communication Framework

Here are the steps to having repeatable, business-focused conversations with your business partners. You should apply these steps to every enterprise architecture deliverable or activity.

Step 1: Get to know your stakeholders

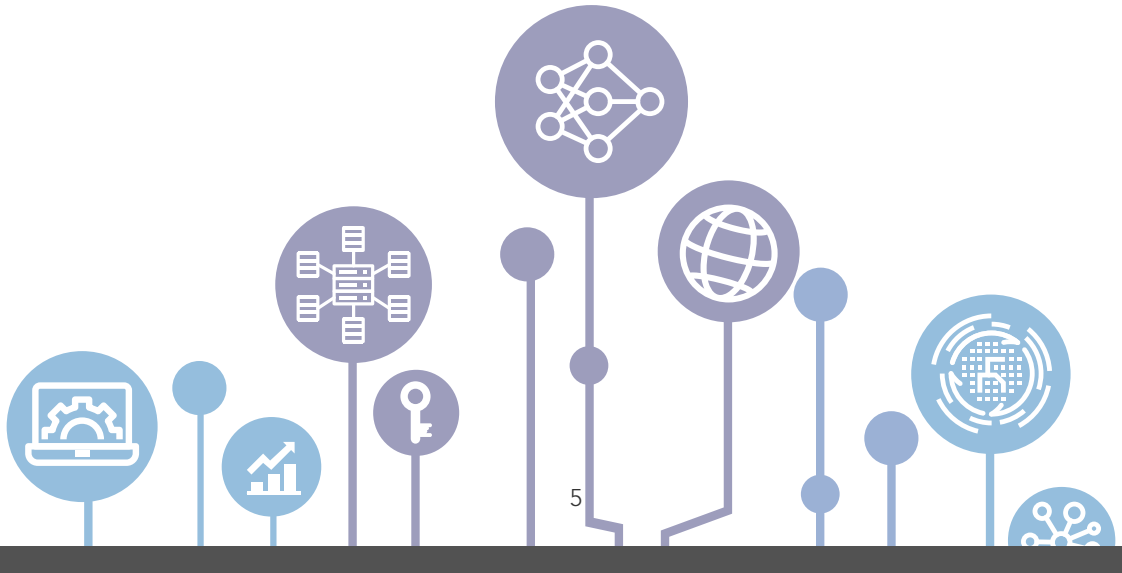
A quick Google search can identify the "golden rules" of communication, but most come down to this: Listening is just as important as talking. How can you know what to say until you know what your audience needs to hear?

Thus, the first step in establishing your enterprise architecture communication framework is to "listen" to your business leaders to identify the questions they are routinely asking. This takes away the guessing and allows you to focus your limited time and resources on answering questions guaranteed to provide business value.

It is important to understand more than just what questions are being asked. You will also need to understand the role of the asker and what kind of decision will be made with the answer. These factors can completely change the scope and level of detail required of the answer – even for the same or similar question.

What applications support our <fill in the blank> process?

Who is Asking?	Role (Point of View)	The Type of Decision (Scope)
CIO	Financial / Resource	Put more resources on program or keep the same?
Data Protection Officer	Risk	Include this process in Data Breach Response Plan or not?
IT	Cost	Outsource or Keep in House?



Step 2: Prioritize and define specific outputs

The first step helps you identify your audience, the answers that stakeholders need, and the types of decisions they will make with the answers. But in what form will the answers be provided? Does each role get their own specific output? How often does each question get asked and what is the value of getting the right answer? The point of defining (and then prioritizing) specific outputs is to choose a manageable amount of work that can be delivered in 30 to 60 days. Think of the prioritized list as a back-log, but you will deliver it in 30-day increments. It is critical that you deliver value early (and often), especially as you increase the number of questions you answer (and thus the number of outputs), which increases the amount of data that must be managed.

When targeting business decision makers, you need to rethink the traditional enterprise architecture deliverables in the context of what business value they bring to each specific role. Also keep in mind the three key themes of the communication framework. Business decision makers are not your typical internal technical customers. Use this table of Do's and Don'ts as a guide:

Do...	Do Not...
Create self-service outputs	Deliver information that requires an enterprise architect to interpret
Generate outputs you **know** will be valuable	Establish outputs that **"might"** be valuable
Present on a single page if possible, with drill through as needed	Create giant posters or outputs that require a plotter just to print
Use common "executive" output formats if possible (e.g., PowerPoint)	Use specialized model notations (e.g., BPM, Archimate)
Always present output in a strategy / business context	Present output in an IT / Technology context

Step 3: Collect and manage data to answer questions

The first two steps give you a great starting point and set you up for success on the first project. In those steps, you identified key questions that will be valuable to answer and defined outputs that provide those answers. Now you are ready to deliver them by collecting the data required to generate selected outputs.

Since technology environments are constantly changing, these outputs will not always be accurate. Unless the data is maintained, eventually mistakes will be made, and business leaders will lose trust. Thus, managing the data is critical to success and must be a routine process.

A challenge in managing data is that most modern enterprises have large and complex technology environments that touch every part of their business. These environments can contain tens of thousands of discrete software and hardware assets, each with hundreds of attributes that must be tracked, summarized, and synthesized into the key communication themes of the framework. Doing this manually will take too much time.

For success, you must be able to scale. So how do you bridge the gap of managing such a large amount of information while translating it simply and effectively into something meaningful for your business? One answer is enterprise architecture software. But the right enterprise architecture software doesn't just support visual modeling of technology projects. As this paper outlines, simply checking the boxes on support for traditional enterprise architecture frameworks will not necessarily translate into successful communication between enterprise architects, IT, and your business. The right enterprise architecture software must scale to provide views across the size and scope of modern enterprise technology portfolios.

Conclusion

While architecture frameworks are important, necessary tools for enterprise architects, they are not sufficient by themselves to support the enterprise architecture team in driving digital transformation for modern businesses. Adopting a simple enterprise architecture-to-business communication framework allows you to better communicate the opportunities and options for achieving company strategy through technology. This will gain the trust of business stakeholders and key decision makers and help enterprise architects elevate themselves to key advisors in company strategy.

To accomplish this goal, you need a solution that provides much more than just visual modeling and support for traditional architecture frameworks. You need a solution that recognizes and supports roles outside of architecture and information technology.

The Planview Solution for Enterprise Architecture

The Planview Solution for Enterprise Architecture delivers what enterprise architects need to capture, analyze, and communicate the state of a company's current application, technology, and business capability portfolio as well as plan a future portfolio that achieves objectives.

The Planview Solution for Enterprise Architecture combines core enterprise architecture functions such as powerful modeling and visualization with dashboards, collaboration, ideation, strategic planning and road-mapping. The solution lets you:

- Define technology and capability roadmaps that drives corporate strategy
- Make fully informed investment decisions to accelerate implementation of the roadmap
- Deliver a flexible, cost-effective application and technology portfolio optimized for business strategy and capabilities
- Understand business capability gaps and mature the capability portfolio to execute strategy
- De-risk the business impact of rapidly accelerating technology and application lifecycles
- Collaborate, communicate, and engage with the broader organization to drive change and become more inclusive.

Visit www.Planview.com to learn more about the Planview Solution for Enterprise Architecture and how it can help you create a communication framework and start having business conversation about technology.

1. Bascu 1 Speaking the Language of Business: How Enterprise Architecture Teams Can Earn a Seat at the Table. (n.d.). Retrieved August 30, 2017, from **http://info.planview.com/cio-quickpulse-survey-_report_ea_en_reg.html**

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