Intellyx EA Communiqué

Jason Bloomberg, December 7, 2015

Supporting the 'Citizen Integrator' with Enterprise Architecture

There's no question that my July 2014 *Forbes* article *Is Enterprise Architecture Completely Broken?* struck a nerve, especially among enterprise architects. While my answer was not an unqualified *yes*, merely asking this question got minds thinking and tongues wagging.

The reason for Enterprise Architecture's death knell is straightforward. As the level of disruption increases, not just in IT departments but across the entire enterprise, traditional approaches to EA are becoming increasingly inadequate for helping organizations successfully navigate the rapids of disruption.

IT portfolio management for example, while important, isn't the true calling of the enterprise architect. Traditional frameworks, from TOGAF to Zachman, may help EAs get a handle on their problems, but are woefully unsuitable for driving toward business agility – the true goal of any successful EA effort, especially when the organization faces such broad-based disruption.

Today, the EA must drive agility across the entire organization, helping to rethink traditional siloed organizational structures and technology initiatives to facilitate end-to-end digital transformation.

It's a tall order. And it won't be easy. But EAs love a challenge, right?

In this series of EA Communiques, I'll help move this ball forward for EAs and for the organizations they work for. Each Communique will tackle one aspect of the changing role of the EA. This first issue tackles the challenge of self-service integration.

The Enterprise Architecture Context for Self-Service

One of the most important disruptive trends in enterprise IT today is the move to self-service. We're used to self-service as consumers – a long-time benefit of the web. No one prefers to interact with a human in order to purchase a plane ticket, trade stocks, or any number of other consumer interactions.

Today, this self-service mentality has infiltrated the enterprise as well. Nobody wants to give IT a call – or even worse, open a ticket – in order to provision an application, gain access to data, update human resources information, build or update a customer-facing web site, or any number of other routine technology-related tasks that take place every day in organizations large and small.

When IT doesn't rise to the challenge of supporting such self-service requirements, however, then people across the organization find ways around IT – leading to shadow IT issues and the bimodal

IT pattern, where fast-moving technology initiatives take place separate from the traditional, slow-moving IT organization.

Allowing the bimodal IT pattern to persist – Gartner's advice to the contrary – is a recipe for disaster. The reason? *Governance*. If 'slow' IT handles governance responsibilities the way it always has, then 'fast' IT will find its way around such governance – leading to security and compliance breaches.

The challenge for IT organizations who find themselves facing this bimodal trap, therefore, is to figure out how to transform 'slow' IT in order to provide the appropriate level of governance for the 'fast' efforts – effective governance that nevertheless won't slow them down.

Enterprise architects are in a perfect position to lead – or at least, facilitate – this effort. After all, governance has always been a critical aspect of EA. The first challenge for architects, however, is breaking with traditional approaches to EA-driven governance that promote and perpetuate slow-mode governance processes.

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Facilitating self-service is a great place to start, because issues around self-service generally center on different groups of people with different priorities and different communication styles. As a result, their interactions can be counterproductive and adversarial.

Solving this problem requires people who have a broad understanding of the organizational, technological, and governance issues at hand, and who can also communicate with different people using language each group is comfortable with. Above any others, these are the skills that characterize a good enterprise architect.

Putting EA to the Test: The Citizen Integrator

Among all the self-service requirements popping up in enterprises today, perhaps the most challenging to support and govern is the call for *self-service integration*.

As the role of APIs mature and integration tools deliver better ease of use, business users are increasingly able and willing to perform integration tasks for themselves. These 'citizen integrators' focus on solving straightforward business problems as the context for their efforts, for example, bringing customer data from Salesforce into a popular BI tool, or facilitating a simple workflow by connecting it to various data sources or applications for the workflow to orchestrate.

Using the right tools is an important facilitator for such citizen integrators. Traditional integration tooling is IT-centric, typically requiring deep technical knowledge. EAs must instead be able to recommend tools like SnapLogic whose ease of use facilitates citizen integrators, while simultaneously supporting the governance needs of the IT organization.

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Tools like SnapLogic shift the context for enterprise integration away from how 'traditional' IT has thought about integration: middleware-centric and complicated, and therefore slow and inflexible. Yes, the danger here once again is falling into the bimodal trap: if 'slow' IT remains in control of integration, then people will find ways around it – invariably leading to governance issues.

The particular nature of enterprise integration, furthermore, exacerbates the governance challenge, because integration works at multiple levels. At the data level, data governance becomes paramount, for example, how to handle personally identifiable information. At the application level, security issues become paramount: who can access particular APIs and for what purpose, for example.

Governance also constrains the misuse of integration. If a citizen integrator connects various data sources and ends up producing an incorrect result, how does the organization know? Similarly, if the integrator publishes an application that depends upon a particular integration, say in an enterprise app store, then what are the rules about how long it remains available for consumption? How do you deprecate or retire it?

The Intellyx Take

The citizen integrators and their managers will have one perspective on the governance issues surrounding self-service integration and how to resolve them. The individuals within the IT organization responsible for such governance may very well have an entirely different take on the matter.

The enterprise architect, perhaps more than anyone else, is well-situated to coordinate a consistent, comprehensive response to such problems. The EA, however, must always keep in mind the importance of maintaining and facilitating the business velocity the organization requires.

Developing strategies for accelerating and automating governance that maintains consistency across the organization is essential to the success of any self-service effort, including self-service integration. Who better than the enterprise architects to develop such strategies?

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