

Higher Education

Case Study

Tertiary Education Institute: Developing a framework for optimising ICT investment

This large tertiary education institute located in Victoria offers vocational education and training and degree pathways in a number of areas including the arts, hospitality, information technology, trades and business. Like many education providers they wanted to understand how technology can improve their student experience, free up limited resources and meet demand for more flexible learning models whilst providing its students with the job ready skills they need today and into the future.

Situation

Spurred on by digital, collaboration and cloud trends many education providers are embarking on ambitious ICT projects that will change the way education services are delivered. However, rushing headlong into these transformation projects can often fail to deliver against expectations.

The challenge for the executive team of this education provider is to have a capability to understand and prioritise technology investments to enable it to evolve to deliver the skills needed for the jobs of the future while adapting to new physical and digital learning environments.

Enterprise Architecture (EA) is recommended for strategic planning in technology, as well as business in general, and integrates the business strategy with technology change - providing clarity of actual and predicted impact for investment and governance decision makers. Does it align with the organisation strategy? Which options are best aligned? Which project is higher priority? Does a solution or change program integrate or conflict with existing investments? Which option or change is a best use of resources to support the curriculum?

Like many education establishments the client did not have an Enterprise Architect. This is a specialised senior role and is often a challenge for a cost conscious organisation to justify as an ongoing inhouse capability.

The client engaged Business Aspect - which brought deep Enterprise Architecture in education experience - to create a framework tailored to their pragmatically scoped needs of a defined approach and articulation of the value of establishing an EA capability.

Objectives

- Define an Enterprise Architecture framework specific to tertiary education that is pragmatic and outcome focused yet addressing strategic decision makers' needs;
- Demonstrate to external stakeholders including the Department of Education increasing maturity in strategic IT management; and
- Articulate the value of Enterprise Architecture to non-technical leadership.

What we achieved

To be successful, the EA framework needed to meet a narrowly scoped and specific needs within the large expanse of the disciplines of Enterprise Architecture and Strategic Planning. The priorities for the deliverable were an education specific framework with acceptance and understanding by wider leadership, technical subject matter experts, and the organisation's executive leaders.

Business Aspect defined a pragmatic implementation of elements of a narrow TOGAF meta model and capability model based views with a strong emphasis on simple uses of Value Based Strategic decision making using Balanced Scorecard and Strategy Maps.

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Within two weeks Business Aspect had defined an integrated strategy to business to technology architectural approach that fosters transparency and a shared vision between the IT and executive teams. We were also able to show how this can be developed and maintained at a low cost whilst manifestly offering high value by enabling better informed investment decisions.

This exercise has given the Department of Education, as well as the executive team, increased confidence in how they assess and prioritise IT projects.

With the framework in place the Technology and executive leadership has the confidence of an approach to execute when they are ready to commence their next strategic programs.

Outcome

The establishment of an EA approach has successfully demonstrated the feasibility and value of pragmatic and rapid readiness for use of Enterprise Architecture within the strategic planning at this higher education provider. It helped the leadership team to understand how it can apply a well thought out decision making framework to making investment decisions and perform ongoing governance of strategic change. It provides a common language for the executive leadership and the IT team to understand where to focus resources for the best return in a complex fast moving and competitive environment.

As a direct result of establishing the EA approach and stepping up their IT maturity, they were able to secure additional funding for a major technology project.

Business Aspect

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