

# Enterprise architecture and organizational agility

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## Introduction

Many companies are starting projects for SOA implementation as a means to achieve agility. Unfortunately, these projects are often started from the ICT perspective, based on the assumption that the basis for SOA is the implementation of flexible ICT services. The business stakeholders are often not involved in these projects. As a result the renewed ICT architecture only is equipped for doing things in old ways with new technology. This will not give the wanted organizational agility to the business. Organizational agility requires that the architecture for the enterprise must be defined before starting a SOA project.

## What is organization agility?

The benefit of SOA lays into the improvement of agility. However, this refers to the reusability and flexibility of IT services rather than to the agility of the organization.

Agility of IT has no value if the organization itself can not be agile.

Organizational agility is required for the organization to quickly adapt to a new business strategy or organizational changes.

Agility does not necessarily mean that the organization must change. Agility also means that the organization can handle service requests in such a way that each department exactly knows which tasks it must perform towards other departments, towards suppliers, towards clients. Such an organization is capable of exactly delivering the quality of service needed that a specific client requests, no more, no less. A client requesting a different service level can also be serviced because of the organizational agility. This kind of agility will help the organization to reduce waste of money and time on excessive servicing and overhead and will provide consistency and quality of service delivery. In this way the organization agility will provide the means to profit growth and expansion.

## Using Service Oriented Enterprise architecture to achieve agility

A SOE architecture shows the business how to design and implement tasks in new ways, rather than doing things in old ways with new technology.

SOE architecture defines a roadmap to change the organization and to implement the business strategy into the business services that will actually leverage the benefits of SOA.

Organizational agility can be achieved by organizing the business as a Service Oriented Enterprise.

Some basic guidelines to achieve organization agility:

- Each process task must be organized as a service.
- Each service must be defined with a contract. The contract describes what the service delivers: “what the service consumer can expect based on the provided service input.”
- Services must be defined according a business architecture that is based on the business strategy.
- Processes are grouped in such a way that redundancy of services is avoided and knowledge and business logic can be reused. Business architects must use architectural techniques to create such grouping.
- The granularity of services must neither be too course-grained nor too fine-grained. This can be achieved by defining different layers within the organization, almost identical to the way a SOA is organized. Business architects must use architectural techniques to find the right granularity.
- Orchestration must be kept separate from the business logic. This can be done by defining layers of services. Typically, the lower layers will contain more business logic, and will be more fine-grained. The higher layers will be more course-grained, controlling services with orchestration of lower layered services, but preferably contain no business logic.
- Each consumer of the service must have a documented subscription of the service, with a contract defining the service parameters for this consumer.
- The business logic per service must be documented. It should not be possible that business logic resides in the heads of people, making the organization dependent on people who have no gain in an organization change and have limited knowledge of the business beyond their working environment.

## Conclusion

SOA without SOE will provide an extra strain on end users because the SOA project itself will provide limited business benefits. The difference of a SOE compared with a traditional organization is that a SOE has a transparent business model consisting of business services where everybody exactly knows which services and quality of service must be delivered. That is a true enabler for organizational agility.

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